

Wm Bradfield  
1900

THE  
BLESSINGS  
OF  
*Christian Philosophy;*  
BEING A  
TREATISE  
ON THE  
BEATITUDES.

In a Familiar DIALOGUE between  
DOCTOR and PARISHIONER.

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By ARTHUR ST. GEORGE, D. D.

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To the most Reverend Father in G O D,

**H U G H**

Lord Arch-Bishop of

**A R M A G H,**

Primate of all I R E L A N D,  
and Metropolitan.

MY LORD,

**I** Have ever thought there  
appeared more useful  
Knowledge, true Mo-  
rality,

**DEDICATION.**

rality, and sublime Divinity, in that short Sermon of our Savior on the Mount; than in all other Books I could meet with. For as to rational Enquiries, purely Speculative, when applied to Divinity, there is always something in them too much forced and refined, to square well with the Simplicity of the Gospel, and often superfluous to the End and Design of the Christian Life.

As the World now goes, perhaps this is neither a Genteel



## DEDICATION.

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Genteel nor Learned, tho' I hope, it is a good Christian Way of thinking, and I trust, Your GRACE will not think the worse of the Argument, if I offer at no more than plain practical Points of Divinity, and to enforce Christian Duties, only from the Blessedness of their Nature.

If this Performance answer the End I design, which is to shew the Worth and Excellence of the Gospel, above all other Conceits of Men of Parts, and  
b high

high Reverence for human Learning, when I present it to Your GRACE, I put it in the best Hands to recommend it to the World, since being at the Head of both Church and State, Your GRACE can give it due Countenance.

I would not be thought however, to disregard the making use of our Reason in Matters of Religion, nor to reflect upon Professors of human Learning or Divinity, who are more engaged

## DEDICATION.

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engaged in Scholastick Studies than I wish to be; and yet, I must confess, that in my pastoral Care, if I may be so happy to keep the Unlearned in Reverence of the Holy Scriptures, by teaching them to proceed in Christian Knowledge, according to the plain Rudiments and first Instructions which Christ hath given us, I shall not think there is any thing else wanting in the School of Christianity.

I have no more to offer,  
but to beg Your GRACE

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to



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# DEDICATION.

to accept of these poor Labors of,

MY LORD,

Your GRACE'S

*Most Dutiful and*

*Obedient Servant,*

ARTHUR S<sup>t</sup>. GEORGE.





THE  
P R E F A C E.

**T**HE Christian Religion in these Days being ill treated, not only by loose and idle Conversation, in order to ridicule and defame it, but in the way of serious Argument frequently attacked, criminated and exploded by Free-Thinkers as well as Free-speakers, also of late there having been Attempts in a very extraordinary Manner to distress the Clergy of our established Church in their Civil Rights, in order to make them appear poor and despicable, neither so useful or necessary a Body, as their reverend Station and Character suppose them to be ; I thought it of some use to set forth in a plain and practical Manner a brief Summary of Christian Doctrines, the better to acquaint Men

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*Men with those Principles, which perhaps are not known to be, or at least not regarded as, Fundamental Articles of Religion. For it may be supposed, that some are officious enough to censure what they do not understand, and run in with the Multitude to do Evil to the Ministers of Christ's Church, out of no perverse Disposition but mere Giddiness of Temper.*

*To enter the Lists in a formal Manner against our Sceptists and Deists, requires more Leisure and Pains than I can well spare; and perhaps after all, the Controversy hath produced no greater Effects, tho' never so well handled by Men of superior Parts, as we know it hath been already, than by the Blessing of God we may hope from this plain Method of stating the Cause of Religion, in a way obvious to common Understanding, and laying it open to the View of Conscience; for if God's Grace doth not cooperate with our Arguments, I doubt the very best of them will have but small Influence, towards the Conviction of others in all our religious Disputes. And therefore I own frankly that I am no Friend to Philosophy or human learning in canvassing and finally determining Disputes about divine Matters, as if it were*



were to grant the Right Hand by way of Reverence to Reason, which ought most certainly to be yielded; at least in all Points mysterious to Revelation. Yet I do believe that our Divines differ in Opinion about this Matter, and have long done so, which I find by a Doctor of the Sorbonne in the last Century who has wrote a Book, *De varia Aristolis Fortuna*. My Reason for thus thinking is, because our blessed Savior and his Apostles, thought it sufficient to contend against both the Jewish and Gentile World by the Simplicity of the Gospel, and I can see no need of doing it in any other way, against our Libertines and Rationalists of the present Age; and I know there are some, who think they see as much Philosophy in that short Sermon of our Savior on the Mount, as in all the Writings of the Antients put together.

The chief Reasons, which generally prevail with our Adversaries, to publish Opinions against the received Doctrines of Christianity, are founded either in Affectation or Licentiousness, and there needs not much Learning to discover their Sophistry. For as to Conscience, which is often pretended, I take it to be but very seldom the true Cause.

The

Rel. medi-  
ci.

*The Man who is full of himself will be apt to regard Religion, just as that Physician did the World, who pretended to cast his Eye no otherwise on it, than he did on his Globe, turn it sometimes round for Recreation. The Libertine scruples paying even so much Respect, but treats it as a Piece of Priestcraft, exposes and ridicules it with premeditated Malice: One is the Effect of Pride, the other of Debauchery. These have always something or other to say against Religion; it either is too high for Reason to comprehend, and God gave them that Faculty to be a Guide to their Actions; it too much abridges their natural Liberty, and God hath made Man originally a free Agent; there is a Perverseness of Heart which will not suffer them to engage in a Christian Life. Shew me the Man free and no way prejudiced or attached to Singularity of Opinion or Degeneracy of Manners, and Religion shall sit as easy on him as his Clothes, both for Use and Ornament. Preposterous Dresses of Affectation and Novelty in grave Assemblies, make no Man either greater or more respected; none appear the worse surely for being in the Fashion, and Religion is not now to seek how to make Court to Mankind for Reverence and*

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Esteem,

*Esteem, by any other Modes than the old, such as Revelation hath taught us. The more ancient and plainer the Doctrine, I conceive, it is the more Christian and Apostolick, and I should be sorry we were yet to learn what the primitive Christians both taught and practised. That Doctors differ in Points of Divinity much involved in Mystery, or that human Learning, in the Nature of Causes and Effects depending on the Secrets of Providence, should fail, and make men liable in some measure to the Reproach of Festus against Paul, rather than tend to the more perfect Discovery of God's Will, is a Truth as certain, as that warm Disputes among Divines, in things which depend not on their Calling, or Authority to preach the Gospel or to feed the Flock, are a very bad Example to profane giddy and conceited Youth in a licentious Age; and therefore some not so well versed in those knotty Studies are so far from admiring, that they are disposed to lament the acute Parts of many of the great men of our Church, who seem to spend too much of their Time in those abstracted and metaphysical Enquiries. The Merchant doth not confide in the fine sailing of his Ship but in the sound Bottom; and what is all the fine spun*

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*Spun Arguments of Divines about God's Decrees, the Analogy of Faith and the like, but to shew how near the Wind they can go without oversetting. The Cause of God and Religion is well enough supported without all that Argument; for much Controversy breeds not the Conversion of a Sinner, but the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power. That is, by divine Efficacy which is apt to accompany preaching and not disputing; for St. Paul speaks here of the internal Operation of God's Spirit, in opposition to all frail Reasonings of Men. This hinders not however but as we receive the Gift, we may minister the same to one another, and seek to excel to the Edifying of the Church, and to strengthen the Brethren; but there is apt to be too much of the wisdom of the World in the enticing Words of Man's Wisdom in Disputation. At least there is that Conceit and Affectation in it, which looks like glorying as wise Men after the Flesh, in St. Paul's Manner of expressing it, and not according to our Christian Calling. Let us speak and write and enforce God's Word just as we find it. Why should Men think to deliver it plainer or more demonstratively than God hath done? the holy Scriptures have revealed*

1 C. 2. 4.

1 Cor. 1.  
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vealed all that God would have us know, why must we pretend to know more than is expressed therein, or treat of divine Things in greater Latitude? The Heresies of the Church in all Ages were forged out of this false and conceited Pretence of human Knowledge, by which at best, in Things above our Capacity, we can have no truer or better Notions or Perception of, than a Man born blind hath of Colours. Our Part seems to be no more than to confide in God's Veracity, not in demonstrating such high Matters by our Reason. If we believe what he has said in his Gospel to be true in the Sense he intended, what Occasion have we to enquire farther? Opinion is not Knowledge, and Opinions may change as well by the force of Testimony as by Argument, and altho' I have but a moral Certainty that what I read in Scripture is the Word of God, and therein I find many mysterious Truths to be believed, yet if I am convinced of the divine Testimony given concerning the Truth of those Writings, I can no more have any Doubt of what is therein delivered, than if I were able to demonstrate every Particular thereof by my own Reason, I do not therefore believe contrary to Knowledge, because in strictness it may be

said I do not understand them, for I have sufficient Evidence from God's Testimony for the Ground of my Faith. If Men would but distinguish between that Judgment they make which amounts to Science and Knowledge, and that which is but Matter of Opinion, Speculation and Fancy; if they would also consider what Proof some things are capable of, and not expect demonstrative Evidence, where moral certainty may be convincing, and the highest Proof the Nature of the Thing will bear, I doubt not but the Article of the Trinity, the Resurrection of the Dead, and Life Everlasting, would be as firmly believed and depended on, as the moral Precepts, which are not denied to be demonstrated by the Dictates of natural Religion. But the Preference some Men give to the Light of Reason above Revelation, shews so much ill grounded and affected Conceit of human Understanding, that some good Divines, taking notice of the ill Use made of Arguments drawn from some mistaken Principles of Reason, of late so common amongst us, in order to weaken the Force of Revelation, begin to doubt whether there be much, if any thing at all in that which we call natural Religion; whether if God had made no Revelati-  
on



on at all of himself, Man would have had any Notion of the divine Being of God, or any Conceptions at all of religious Duties. St. Paul to Timothy says, Keep that committed to thy Trust, what therefore is that *Depositum*? not a Thing of your own Invention or the Issue of your own vain Reasonings; a Thing deposited with you, not proceeding from you, whereof you are but the Guardian, not the Proprietor. Keep it as a Disciple not Master, as the Talent of the Catholick Faith, according to Vincentius Lirinensis. For after Revelation is come, we plainly see the Reason of Religion, but not before. That Reason might dictate a safe Way to Salvation, if any could be so steady as to follow it in the whole Tenor of their Lives, I will not gainsay, because there is nothing in revealed Religion that is directly contrary to pure Reason in a perfect State of Nature; and where there is no Law there is no Transgression; but surely there are but few upon whom Reason hath its full Weight, because of the natural Prevalency of Passion and Appetite, fewer who see the true Reason of things to be done in every various Circumstance, and fewer yet, who so seeing will do, according to what they see and understand to be  
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be best. So that arguing for Religion, barely upon the Nature and Reason of Things, is but a sort of philosophical Cant, and we cannot but conclude that it is a hard Task for any Man, but indeed a thing impossible for Mankind in the general, to attain unto the true Knowledge of all the Gospel Beatitudes, if Christ himself had not given us his divine Lessons, and by his own Example chalked out to us that infallible Way. The Pride and Conceit in Man of his own Reason would not let him perhaps think any Being superior to himself: for altho' God told him in Paradise, and revealed the Commandment not to eat of the Tree forbidden, yet even there Adam had Notions of himself higher in his own Esteem than God's Authority, and perhaps he thought himself wiser than to obey him. The first Sin was this Disregard to divine Revelation, and therefore one would think, the first Care we should have, in all Matters of religious Concern should be, not to dispute the least Article which is supported by a divine Testimony. And yet we find the very Disciples of our Lord could not, or would not understand his Sayings, tho' he spoke plainly of his going to Jerusalem to be put to Death, because of their own self-conceited

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conceited Notions of a glorious and triumphant Messiah in a worldly Sense. Which shews manifestly how weakly, all Men argue, and how liable they are to mistake when they oppose divine Revelation, for Christ's own Revelation of himself, had they sincerely believed in him, had been sufficient in this Matter to have stifled all human Conceits. Strange it is that Men should hesitate about conforming in all Points to, or make any Doubt of that which must be their Rule of Faith! Can any one say what God wills better than himself? If Christ's own verbal Declaration, of what should be done concerning himself, did not find ready Acceptance and Belief with his Disciples, so as to be clear with them and undoubted, we have little Cause to think there is so much in human Reason, to instruct us in the Will and Commands of God, as some imagine. To build altogether on natural Religion, which is so much the modern Divinity of our new Philosophers, is either charging Christ Jesus with the unnecessary Office of a Mediator or the holy Ghost with the Works of Supererogation, or else presuming that all the Professors of Christianity till this Age had no sufficient Knowledge of Holy Scripture. But if Reason will needs be  
above



above Revelation, let it first be proved that human Reason is perfect and infallible; that it alone is able to make us wise unto Salvation; that it can declare unto us all the Council of God; that to add to or diminish from it is prohibited, as well as to add to or diminish from the Word of God. This would be to preach a new Gospel, and truly then they have no need of any Inspiration to do that, which Reason it seems can so well do without it. The Question is not whether the wise and learned of our Times can give us Help and Assistance to unfold the Mysteries of holy Scripture, but the Design is plainly to condemn all that looks like Mystery in Religion, and to turn it into mere Allegory, if not Banter. But this we are sure that neither Christ nor his Apostles could err, but we are not sure whether they deliver things so plain, but that wilful Minds may mistake their meaning. The Bible, which the primitive Christians and Fathers of the Church in all Ages have allowed to contain a compleat System of Faith and divine Knowledge, if the Doctrine of human Reason improved by our Rationalists is to be infallible, would be of no manner of Use at all, and the Papists and they may well set up together, and boast of the Au-

*Authority of their Church. But let me ask a few Questions. How came you to know that God is to be worshipped? you will say the thing is plain from natural Reason, in as much as he is the Creator and Preserver of all things. I ask again after what manner must we worship him? Reason again answers, in that manner which is most pleasing to him. Then I ask once more, what is that manner? who hath declared it to you? how came you to find it out? did your Reason dictate any thing to you of Adam in Paradise and of his Transgression? tho' it is possible, by the help of Tradition to have come at that Knowledge. Was it your Reason which taught you the way of reconciling Man to God, after his Fall? that let you into the Secret of the divine Wisdom and Knowledge, the Light of the Doctrine of Remission of Sins thro' the Mediation of Christ Jesus? that instructed you in the great Duty of Prayer, and to call upon God for all things necessary both for the Body and the Soul? who told you that you had a Soul? not your Reason surely, for then the Antients had not been so ignorant in that matter, nor your wisest Philosophers spoken so incoherently and doubtfully of it; neither had they directed*

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*ted their Worship to Idols, the Work of Men's Hands, or to Heroes and deified Mortals. All the Knowledge of the Being of our Souls came originally from divine Revelation, God had either inspired into the wise Heathens that Thought, or, which is most likely, they borrowed it from the Traditions of Men, who had picked it out of the inspired Writings of the Prophets. All that confused Heap of Fancy and Fable, which the antient Poets put together, for the various Entertainment of the Soul in a separate State, is but the Gleanings of Revelation, dispersed in the antient World by the inspired History of the Bible.*

*But you will say perhaps that the Duties of Morality which are the Foundation of Religion may, altho' the positive Institutions of God cannot, be observed, without the Help of Revelation. I doubt you will find your Mistake herein also, in doing the Will of God in a holy and pure manner, in the Sense of the Gospel. Was it Christ or your own Reason which told you that it is God's express Will, that all Mankind should be so universal in Charity, as to love their Enemies; to be poor in Spirit, and so lowly minded, as to be thankful to God for suffering for Righteousness-sake? the true*



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*true Secret you'll find is this. All Religion depends upon Revelation and nothing else for Purity and Perfection. Morality holds but a faint Resemblance of our Duty, if it be not improved by Christian Doctrines. When once the Light of the Gospel begins to shine upon us, the Moralist sees plainly wherein Religion doth consist; that it is not founded only in bare Equity and Justice between Man and Man, but also in a Spirit of Truth and Piety, in that Relation which is between God and Man. This he could not find out before, because human Reason alone afforded him but very imperfect Notions of the divine Nature, and none at all of the Necessity of a Mediator, till God himself revealed it; but then all appeared in a plain Light; and his Reason led him to consider the Institutions of Christ, the moral as well as positive, to be no less than an Improvement of his own Judgment: the Law of his Nature no more than the Law of God was destroyed, but fulfill'd; tho' the Ceremonial of the Jews was abolished, the moral Part remained entire, nay so much so, that whatever before was imperfectly and but in part known, was now clear and filled up, by illuminating our Minds with heavenly Truths;*

with Truths that not only respect God, but our Neighbor and our selves, upon account of our several and respective Relations, God for Sake of our Neighbor and our selves, and our Neighbor not only for Sake of him and our selves, but also for Christ's Sake. 'Tis an easy thing now by examining the Gospel by our Reason, to see how agreeable our Religion is to the Nature of Man, how well it answers all the divine Purposes, to the Glory of God and our own Salvation. This is not therefore from any Efficacy in our natural Faculties, but from the Discoveries God hath been pleased to make of himself for our Conviction. Many Errors and Mistakes, no doubt, we should have still labored under about Religion, if we had not the Help of Christian Doctrines to instruct us, and our Service would no more answer the Will of God in the Perfection of Morality, than in the other positive Duties, for that Spirit and Truth which is taught and explained by the Gospel, if taken but in a moral Sense, is much more sublime than either Jew or Gentile ever thought or pretended to. And thus it appears that one Reason for publishing Opinions contradictory to the received Doctrines of Christianity, altho' there be so little Foundation for so doing, ariseth from a  
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## P R E F A C E.

XXV

*fond Conceit of our own Parts, affecting to prefer natural to revealed Religion.*

*There is another Reason for publishing like Opinions, which is founded in Licentiousness, when a Man errs maliciously and wilfully, hateth to be reformed and hath cast God's Word behind him. It is no Wonder that he, who lives contrary to the Rules of Christianity, should endeavor to put a bad Construction on Christian Doctrines, seek to act consistently with himself, and lay down Principles agreeable to his Practice. We know Men's Opinions are too apt to follow their Passions; who is there not disposed to approve or condemn, whatever he either loves or hates? some indeed pretend to plead Conscience for dissenting from the Established Religion; but Conscience will not justify publishing their Opinions against lawful Authority, if they have no Call from God for so doing; but indeed I suppose here that all is done out of Licentiousness and not Conscience. For an Enthusiast deserves our Pity, and we ought to treat with such in the way of Bedlam, rather than after the manner of the Schools. But since we cannot see into Men's Hearts, let us take their Professions, true or false, as they make them; indeed if we can discover*



*ver their ill Lives, we have no Reason to abide by their Principles or think candidly of them. Christian Professors give the Lie to their Doctrines, whenever their Manners contradict the plain Precepts of Morality; for the Effect is the best Proof of the Cause, and Uniformity in Life and Profession ordinarily goes together to enforce Conviction; even Philosophy it self will work but little by dint of Argument, if we disclaim it in Practice. Our Actions therefore are true Indications of our Minds, and let the Libertine talk as finely as he will, we shall look upon him in no good light, neither much consider or regard his Opinion. How such as these should take upon them to be Censors of the World or Advocates for the Cause of Religion, is a Boldness above common Decency, and yet few perhaps are so free of their Admonitions, or more dogmatical in their Assertions. How common a thing is it to find the Youth of our Schools of Learning, both of Law and other Sciences, who are just let loose in the World, and have not as yet obtained the common Government of themselves for decent Conduct in Life, at the very instant of Matriculation set up for Masters of the Faculties! how soon will our young Scholar commence a Critick in Religion!*

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(for Religion comes properly enough under the Consideration of Men of all Professions) and if he be not devoted to the Study of Divinity as his principal Calling, the first thing he generally does, is to confound Religion with academical Learning, to forget his Creed to make room for Science and Disputation. A very preposterous way of improving the Understanding by unlearning our Catechism! Whether it be that we begin at the wrong end in our philosophical Lectures, by putting Logicks before Ethicks, as if it were *Impar Congressus*, and we are to expect nothing from the Pregnancy of the human Mind so instructed, but a false Conception or something monstrous, or whether it be that the Mind, like the Stomach in Youth, is apt to gorge more than it can keep without casting, yet it is certain and we find by Experience, that from these or some other Causes, too early a Progress in human Learning is often attended with Contempt of Religion, and young Men captivated with Improvements in Philosophy, are apt to enquire farther into mysterious points of Divinity, than is fitting for such. The Love of Knowledge is an Appetite, as much to be restrained within Bounds, as any Passion whatsoever, and this is not to be done  
† any

*any other way than by Religion ; and if Men will give that up entirely, and take what Liberty they please to philosophize, and not stint their Enquiries into sacred and divine Things, this Love of Knowledge will lead them to think and act as wildly and idly, as a Man distracted and out of his Wits. It is an easy Transition from Liberty into Licentiousness, when the Passions are strong and Reason weak, but conceited of Learning. A Habit so early acquired and indulged takes always deep root in the Heart, and often drags after it all that Malice or Obstinacy can invent. So that a young Debauchee argues himself at length into Scepticism or Deism, and what at first was but Levity and Gaiety of Temper, turns by degrees into the Gravity of serious Argument, and he begins to act upon Principle. Speculation and Practice will at one time or other meet together and shake Hands, and it matters not which is the Cause of the other, since if they take a wrong turn, they are both alike the Bane of all Virtue and Religion. Whether Licentiousness begets Atheism and Infidelity, or this the other, Religion will be the Butt for both, and the Christian Religion to be sure is the fairest Mark for Libertines to shoot their Arrows at. We must expect such*  
*Attacks*



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*Attacks frequently in a luxurious Age; 'tis but what the World have been pestered with, ever since our Savior Christ Jesus appeared in it; and are no more than what he predicted, in his Conversation with and Admonitions given to his Disciples; but the Cause is never the worse, I hope, that our Enemies are his, or that his Ministers are reviled and spoken evil of for his Names-sake. It is no new thing for Satan to appear and pretend to keep Company with the Sons of God, or to transform himself into an Angel of Light. We know he dared even to tempt Christ himself, and shall the faithful in this World hope to 'scape free from his Temptations? wicked and audacious Men do but copy after him; from walking in the Council of the ungodly, to standing in the way of Sinners, till at length confirmed and settled in their way of Life, they set themselves down after a magisterial Manner in the Seat of the scornful, as the Prophet David very poetically, but truly, describes the Gradation of Vice. What Influence their ridiculing of Scripture hath upon the World, is a sad Token and Mark of the Degeneracy of our Times, but it is no more than that; for the Church of Christ is as pure as ever, its Doctrines as perswasive and effectual, when they, like the*

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Seed

*Seed sown in good Ground, meet with a good Mind and Understanding fit to receive them; and it is to be hoped that there is a Spirit of Piety and Purity yet remaining in our Church amongst its Professors. If there be not as much good Fruit as formerly, it is not for want of sowing the Seeds of good Doctrine; let us all therefore cultivate our Hearts with the Preparation of Innocence, root out the Corruptions which prevail amongst us, our Pride and Vain-glory, our Luxury and Intemperance, our Love of this World and Forgetfulness of the other, and then see what a Prospect there will be of a good Harvest? Faith and good Works will soon come in Fashion, and Christians will learn to see their Gain in Godliness. But if Religion be left to grow amongst Weeds, the good Seed will be choak'd, and how can we expect Fruit? We know of no mere Man, except Adam who was created in a perfect State, but had his Reason and Religion, like the Dawnings of the Day, by a successive progression of Light breaking in upon him, till he came to full Age and Understanding; and yet our Appetites and Passions very early get the Start of both; so that the one is like the Leaves, the other like Blossoms and Fruit on the Tree; now to put forth  
Leaves*

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*Leaves is but an Argument of Vegetation, but the Fruit, of Culture. The Blossom indeed precedes, as Reason doth Religion, but if there be any Worm of Sin to corrupt Reason, it will no more bring forth Religion, than a blasted Blossom will produce Fruit. And therefore I have long thought it not right in Parents, to be so over hasty, as to turn their Sons loose into the World at an Age when they can have no settled Notions of Religion or Morality, and trust them to the Tuition of any set of Men, whose Discipline being in a publick way, cannot be supposed to be very exact, and where perhaps the Improvement of their Morals passes but for a secondary Care. If Discipline must yield to Luxury, that epidemical Disease which like a Canker spreads into the Gardens of Virtue, it is no wonder that neither Flowers nor Fruit can stand, and we may expect Storms and Blasts from every Quarter. An Evil to be lamented, but I see not how by human means to be remedied. This is a Vice which generally springs from Peace and Plenty; who then cannot but admire the great Goodness of God in his Dispensations, when he punisheth a Nation which is no otherwise to be reformed but by publick Judgments! All our Preaching and Writing, and other such*



*Methods of holy Admonition in the common way, lose great part of their weight at such a Season; there is neither Disposition to hear, nor Leisure to recollect, nor Authority left to enforce Instruction; nothing but divine Wrath to open our Eyes and call our Manners in question. These Nations have for near half a Century been reaping and gathering in their Harvest, and are come to such a pass now they seem not to know where to bestow all their Fruits; surely they think like the rich Man in the Gospel, to pull down their Barns and build greater; and say within themselves, take thine Ease, eat drink and be merry for half a century more; but when God's Judgments come, whose shall those Goods be which we have provided? We have need to consider seriously St. Paul's Admonition to the Ephesians and apply it*

Ep. 5. 15. *to our selves. See that ye walk circumspectly, not as Fools, but as Wise, redeeming the time, because the Days are evil. For was there ever so much time lost in Diversions and Entertainments, so much undistinguished and ill-sorted Extravagance, in Dress and Equipage, such Pomp and Vanity above our Condition and Circumstances, and withal so much Poverty as in these Days? Men, who lead Lives so much out of the way of Holiness*  
and

and Piety, must necessarily fall into great Straits, and from the Uneasiness of their Circumstances, may be supposed to quarrel with their Religion. A profligate Life will ever debauch the Mind and Understanding, altho' well instructed in Christian Duties and the ordinary Offices of Religion, for as evil Communications corrupt good Manners, so evil Manners will in time deface and corrupt all sacred Thoughts and Communications whatsoever. There is nothing like Religion to make a Man's Mind free and easy, yet if he lives so as to be impossible for him to enjoy any Peace of Conscience, he will be apt to cast about for Arguments to harden the Heart, and become impenitent; and then, when his Religion is not able to change and reform him, what wonder is it that he seeks to ridicule and forget his Religion?

There is not, perhaps in any Christian Country in the World, so little Ostentation used, or less Ceremonies required, in the outward Splendor of the Church, than in this and our neighboring Kingdom; we suppose no Grace or Sanctity is conferred by pompous Solemnities in divine Worship; yet there can be no publick Establishment without some Discipline,

*pline, and those who are not disposed to love, should not however be suffered to revile or distress her, under the Pretence of standing fast in the Liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free. For*

Gal. 5. 1. *the Apostle tells us, we may not use Liberty for an occasion to the Flesh; for*

13. *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and*

17. *the Works of the Flesh are, Adultery, Fornication, Strife, Heresies, and a long Train of such like enormous Vices: and therefore in whomsoever any of these high Crimes appear, they surely have not the least Right to pretend to reprove, or make Reflections upon the Church: the Pretence of Christian Liberty, in such as these, to speak freely and vent their Opinions, is scandalous and but mere unbridled Licentiousness, only to satisfy a fleshly Appetite; by an indiscreet Use*

19. *of evangelical Liberty to bite and devour one another, and to give just Offence to the Church.*

*Foreign Historians have remarked upon us with a Note of Admiration, for Unsteadiness in publick Administration both as to Religion and Politicks. We have had indeed Revolutions in Church and State; and what Nation hath not? But our Religion hath only ebb'd and flow'd*



*flow'd with the Times, it was never lost in our Commotions, but returned again with the settlement of the State. In one thing we zealously indeed pretend to be unchangable, and that is, the Love of Liberty; but alas! how often is that Liberty abused, how often doth it degenerate into an evil way of speaking, writing, acting and contriving both against Church and State. Is it that the Uncertainty of the Elements, in these Islands in which we live, hath any malignant Influence upon the Mind, to cause it to be as changable as the Wind, that Religion with us hath its various Seasons of Flux and Reflux? Or rather is it not the Luxury of the Times, the Love of this World in a long Course of Peace and Affluence in the good Things of Life, which makes us so full of our selves, that we seem to forget God and deny him? Free we are, yet do we not use our Liberty as a Cloak of Maliciousness, not as the Servants of God? Zeal we have, yet where is our Knowledge? When our Jealousies and Mistakes about Church Affairs are frequent, and we have so much the Spirit of reforming the State Ecclesiastical, when the Fault lies in popular Vices, in Avarice, or*  
*Envy*

1 Pet. 2.  
16.

*Envy at the flourishing Condition of the Church, and such like Causes of Discontent. Religion hath not always due Countenance amongst us, only by Fits and Starts. A sort of intermitting Fever is the epidemical Disease of our Church; we have been under the hot and cold Regimen; nothing we find gives Ease but Moderation and Temperance, the surest Catholicon for most Disempers.*

*But it is worthy of Observation at this time, when Attempts are made, not only against the Doctrines of the Church, but even to distress our Clergy in their civil Rights, and we ought to take notice; that there is such a Mixture of Church and State Affairs in our Constitution, that nothing manifestly noxious or inconvenient to the one or the other happens, which doth not in the end in many Respects offend both. Open Licentiousness will hardly stop at affronting the Government, whenever it attacks the established Religion with Impunity; and the State hath little less to fear from Profaneness than from Sedition. So that it is the Interest of the Government to keep up Reverence towards Religion, and not to suffer an unbounded Liberty of defaming, and calling*

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*in Question the fundamental Articles of our Faith by bold Reformers, who upon the least Encouragement will be apt to carry their Attempts upon Reformation much farther. For it is hardly possible to suppose, that the ends of Society can be well obtained, without preserving the Fear of God, as well as the Honor of the King. There must at least be an outward Reverence for both, or else the Constitution will be in manifest Danger, since there can be no Union or mutual Intercourse for publick Good, without religiously observing the divine as well as human Laws. If Men did but know and consider what it is to be pure in Heart, meek and merciful, and had any good Notions of the Benefit and Necessity of those other Christian Graces, recommended by our Savior as the Foundation of all Religion, there would be but little of this unbri- dled Licence of reasoning profanely upon Things sacred, in opposition to publick Authority and the established Discipline of the Church. That nothing ever so wonderful could be said of God and Things divine, but we were bound to believe; and that to speak the least of divine Matters was not fit, without the previous Light of the Understand-  
f ing,*



ing, were Maxims laid down by the Wisdom of the Antients, and supposed to be Axioms evident in themselves without any Explanation. How then comes the present Age to have less Divinity than the old Heathens, when every profane Libertine sets up now for a divine Philosopher? This can be no way consistent with true Religion or good Policy; for there is no such Thing as a free Liberty of speaking and writing, without a Liberty as free taken of acting, doing and combining against publick Settlements of all Kinds both in Church and State. What then can restrain Men from breaking into this profane Liberty, but to bring them under the Tuition of the Gospel, to teach them Modesty and Humility, to have a low, and that is to have, a just Opinion of themselves, that to be poor in Spirit, is to be blessed and happy, and that there is no way of attaining to any Perfection in divine Wisdom and Knowledge, without being prepared with spiritual Poverty. This is the true Method of informing and reforming the Mind of Man, but for the Reformation of his Manners and the Peace of the Government, if this will not do the Business, the civil Power must be called in, to support the Church. For

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Doctrin

*Doctrine without Discipline is, in the Gospel Language, casting Pearls before Swine; if it be not enforced by good Laws, the Profane will trample on it, be it never so holy. If the Magistrate will not put his hand to the work there is no way of restraining the Wickedness of the People, unless by the Dread and Terror of divine Wrath and national Judgments from God; for hardened Sinners are not to be reformed but by Punishment; the Ministers of the Gospel may exert themselves in all the Duties of their Function, but it will be in vain without it.*

*Human Power indeed cannot force the Conscience, will not make Men believe contrary to their Understanding, but it may make them decent in their Behavior, and to keep from giving publick Offence; and is there not a Form in Godliness which is as necessary as a Form in Government? The Administration cannot act well without Forms, and the Government must support its own Administration, as well in divine as civil Matters; so that if it were only for reason of State, the Establishment in the Church must be defended by the Authority*

thority of the Magistrate, against the open Adversaries of Religion.

Hard it is to say how far and no farther Men may go on in controverted Points of Divinity, without publick Offence to Religion, but it is easy enough to see when the Controversy is levelled against fundamental Articles, in manifest Defiance of all Religion, and in Opposition to all Things sacred; wherein the Generality of Men acquiesce, not out of Favor to the Establishment, but out of pure Principles of Christianity. If Men are suffered to go on in ridiculing and scoffing at these Principles, without publick Notice, the Controversy is at an end, and Infidelity will ride triumphant over Church and State.

But I have a word of Admonition to offer to every private Christian. Not only our Governors but every good Man in private Life, as far as he is able, is obliged to see this Abuse rectified; because Offences of this Nature are an affront to God and good Manners, and ought to be treated in common Conversation with the highest Reproach, and the Authors of them in all Companies should never escape without Rebuke and open Resentment. If Men, who by being



*ing* early educated in the Precepts of the Gospel, are supposed to have some Reverence for Holiness and Piety, will be afraid to vindicate their Religion, at so small Expence as the Loss of a profane Jest, or even the Favor of a debauched Companion, they know but little of St. Paul's Advice concerning the Inconvenience of foolish talking and jesting, and do not consider that the Wrath of Eph. 5. 4. God cometh because of these Things. Certainly a good Christian in no Company ought to be ashamed of doing Justice, as well as he is able, to God and to his Religion, and yet perhaps that, which we cannot hear spoke without a Blush, we can pass by without professing openly our Resentment at it, or manifesting any Indignation at the Offence put upon our Modesty. But if profane Discourse were commonly treated in another manner, as it deserves, and it were as dangerous and criminal to reproach God and Religion, as it is the King and the Government, or if it were but the Fashion to resent such Language in private Conversation, as a Mark of ill Breeding and below a Gentleman's Character, Religion would not fail to keep both Church and State in good Esteem and Authority.

Men

*Men would be apt to see the Beauty of Holiness, to be meek and lowly minded; and whatever things are pure, lovely and of good Report; if there be any Virtue or Praise in them, to think of these Things.*

*Acts. 17.  
21.*

*There is not always need of human Learning to confront the Profane in this Age, who like the Athenians of old seem to spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new Thing. Our Business is to be well acquainted with the Institutions of Christ, to attain unto those Graces of divine and moral Perfection, which he hath recommended under the Sanction of Beatitudes, and when a Man is well affected to this Gospel Learning, and made some Progress in it, he will soon find Arguments to oppose against the boldest Adversaries of our Religion. Perhaps his Reproofs may not seem a Kindness altho' he smite only as a righteous Man ought in Love and Charity, which the Psalmist accounts as the sweet savor of an excellent Oil; yet this good there will be in it: We shall not seem to give up the Cause of God, or encourage the Adversaries of our Faith, when we wrestle against spiritual Wickedness. Who knows but  
God*

*Psal. 141.  
5.*

God may give our righteous Reproofs a Blessing, as on Abigail's Caution to David, and they may accept our Person and hearken unto our Voice. To be strong Ep. 6. 10. in the Lord and in the Power of his might to stand against the Wiles of the Devil is St. Paul's Exhortation to the Ephesians, 'tis a necessary Part of our Christian Calling, and may be of use to the Conversion of others.

This is what I have to offer in these dangerous times, that every body would seek to make one towards the Work of Reformation, first to acquaint himself with the necessary Graces of Christianity to entitle him to a Blessing, and then to exert his Endeavors by righteous Admonition and Reproof for the universal Good of others; that the Cause of God and Religion may not want Advocates, to plead against conceited Infidels and profane Libertines when the Days are evil.

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 E R R A T A.

Preface, p. ix. l. 9. for *Aristolis*, r. *Aristotelis*. p. 12, l. 5. for *was*, read *were*. p. 44. l. 17. for *Views*, r. *Vows*. p. 54. l. 15. for *nard*, r. *hard*. p. 237. l. 28. for *breeds*, r. *bread*. p. 326. l. 12. for *nocent*, r. *innocent*.







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# DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

DOCTOR *and* PARISHIONER.

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## CHAP. I.

D.



HAVING taken Notice of your constant Attendance at your Parish Church every Lord's Day this whole Summer, that I may the better inform my self of the good Effect of my own Labours, and your Proficiency in Gospel Learning, I take this Opportunity to call upon you to give some Account of what you re-

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member

## *The Blessings of*

member of my Discourses on the Beatitudes, which you well know have been the Subject I treated on during that Season.

*P.* I am oblig'd to you for reminding me of Things which deserve our most serious Consideration, and I have heard it was the common Practice in the first Age after the Reformation, to note the Heads of Discourse in every Sermon deliver'd from the Pulpit, and to reduce them into Writing by the Help of our Memory.

*D.* No doubt the first Protestant Reformers of our Church were Preachers, and that Reformation was brought about chiefly by means of preaching; for the People had been so long before kept in such Ignorance of the Holy Scriptures, that when the Spirit of preaching began to obtain, all Men seem'd religiously dispos'd to hear the Word of God explain'd and deliver'd in such a manner as the People might be able to judge of Doctrine by Reason, as well as by the Authority of the Church; and therefore those who were studious and Lovers of the Gospel, took more than ordinary Pains to write down the material Parts of the Discourse in the best manner they were able. And it had an extraordinary good Effect upon them; for in a few Years the Reformation from

*Pa-*





*Popery* advanc'd to such a degree, that the common People by help of their Bibles, and some short Notes taken in the manner I have told you, were able to argue against the Errors of the Church of Rome, and to give a ready Answer to every one that asked a Reason of the Hope that was in them. But in this Age that Practice is out of Use, because our Children are suppos'd in their younger Years, to be fully instructed by the Church Catechism, and other short Tracts common amongst us, in the first Rudiments and most material Points of Doctrine; and the Laws of the Land have so well provided for a preaching Ministry now, which was far otherwise in those former Days, that almost every one may, if he pleases, hear a Sermon every Lord's Day; nay, he is so required to do by Law, without going farther than his own Parish Church.

*P.* I am not then I find under your Censure, for not taking down in writing the Heads of your Discourses, and the Method of proceeding in your Argument upon every point of Doctrine.

*D.* I discommend no one whose Diligence and Industry may incline him to take all that pains; but I say there seems not to be that Necessity for it now as  
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*The Blessings of*

heretofore. For every good Christian at this Day is suppos'd to be well read in the holy Scriptures ; at least all such as can read and have made it their Business to attend on the publick Service of God, are suppos'd to have a competent Knowledge of most of the common Doctrines reveal'd in the holy Scriptures, and to be able to carry away in their Memory all the Heads of Discourse, and the Preacher's Method of arguing, upon the bare hearing a Sermon distinctly deliver'd from the Pulpit ; and if they will be at the pains to recollect themselves any time the same Day, they will soon learn to do it in some good manner, so as to profit much thereby without the Labour of writing. And indeed this is but what every good Christian ought to do, who goes into the House of God to hear a Sermon. He should reverently attend, and endeavour to remember every Word therein deliver'd, and recollect the whole Matter thereof in his Mind after he comes home, and dispose it in such Order, as to profit by it ; that is, to apply it to himself as far as it touches his Life and Manners : And if the Preacher takes care to proceed in any just Order and regular Method, you will find this is no hard matter to do, always provided you drive  
not

not out of your Memory what you there hear, by idle Conversation or worldly Cares.

P. I perceive what you say is very practicable, for altho' I never rook upon me to write, yet I think I shall satisfy you that there is not any material part of your Discourses on the Beatitudes which I cannot reduce into some Form and Method after my own way, both for the Benefit of my self and others. But I confess I do not find this so easy a thing to do, as you say, after some of your fine Preachers, as they are called of late, for if it were not for the Text, I should be hard put to, to find one single Sentence of the Word of God in a whole Sermon.

D. It is no Wonder that in so long a Time as Preaching has been common amongst us, some Change should be made therein to comply with the Times, and for Sake of Improvement, and that some should attempt a Refinement both in the Manner and in the Language; but surely it were to be wish'd that Men of Parts would stick more to Scripture Expression in their Sermons deliver'd in our *English* Tongue, at least not to disclaim it wholly as some seem to do; for I wou'd desire to know whether the Language of Scripture, as obsolete as some wou'd make it,



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be not well understood amongst us at this very Day, and whether this be not owing to the Use of it in the publick Service of the Church; whereas other Books wrote at the Time of the first Translation of the Bible amongst us, are become much more difficult to read from the Change of our Language; and therefore whether it be not necessary to go on in the same way of speaking, with a mixture of literal Expressions of Scripture, properly us'd in our Sermons, which has continued near two hundred Years, and may continue as many more to edify, rather than change with every Age, and so lose the Significancy of our Scripture Translation, and consequently in time the Use of our Bibles to the common People.

*P.* It is not their Words that I find fault with, for really I think I have sometimes heard a fine Sermon, and yet I don't know how it was, for upon recollection I found I cou'd make but little of it.

*D.* That was owing to the new Manner of handling a point of Doctrine out of the ordinary Method of old Divines. For in a polite Age, such as this, it is now suppos'd by some, that a Discourse is flat and unentertaining, if there be not  
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some Art and Skill shewn to raise our Attention : And therefore the Novelty of speaking on a Text of Scripture by Way of Essay according to the new Taste, with Arguments of a moral Nature drawn from Reason only, without the least mention of Scripture Authority, is enough with these Men of polite Literature. But however well this may be in Schools and Colleges of Learning for the Improvement of Youth, yet I fear it will not do so in our publick Churches for the Edification of ordinary Hearers. Besides, it looks somewhat oddly that a Christian Doctrine shou'd seem to be better supported by Arguments drawn from Reason, which may be fram'd sophistically to cover Errors, than by Authority of plain Scripture, where there can be no Deceit; which Doctrine also the common People will conceive much better of by Proofs drawn from the Bible, than from the nicest Rules and Method of Reasoning; and it is wrong to think that the Generality of Men can or will make so much use of their Reason, as to be more easily convinc'd by the Force thereof, than by plain letter of Scripture, upon which they build the Assurance of Faith in Points of a higher Nature than their Reason can comprehend. Speaking from the Pulpit

in the way of an Essay-writer, is but to shew a Man's Parts, may catch indeed itching Ears, but will never edify half so well as the old Method. Therefore I do not wonder you find it a difficult Task to collect the Materials of a Discourse of that sort, and bring it into order, because if you remember not the very Words, you will be apt to maim the Sense, at least the Beauty of the whole is all lost.

*P.* I find now that there is more in preaching, than speaking well upon a Subject, the one may be only to please ourselves, but the other must be for the sole Benefit of the Hearers; and I find that your Manner of enforcing Christian Duties, by Evidence of the holy Scriptures, as well as by other Arguments, has the greatest Weight with it, and that your laying down Heads of Discourse, and dividing it orderly and regularly after some certain Method, is the best way for the Memory to retain the Sense of what is spoken, and for this reason it is that I am able to recollect more of your Sermons than of others who go out of the common Road.

*D.* I am highly pleas'd to find my Labour has not been in vain with you, and by the Account you give I shall be the better able to judge of my own Performance;



mance ; for you observe rightly that a Preacher who delivers his Thoughts on any Subject, shou'd always do it for the Edification and Benefit of those that hear him : and he ought also to do it in such a manner, that his Sense and Argument be conceiv'd at once, without Wandering or much Circumlocution ; for Men are taught and instructed by plain and clear Reasoning, not by Multitude of Words or quaint Expression. For surely Oratory is the least part of an Evangelist or Gospel Preacher. For St. *Paul* was a good Orator, witness his Address and elegant Speech before King *Agrippa*, and yet, he says, Christ sent him to preach the Gospel not with Wildom of Words. Men's Minds and not their Passions, are the Things we are to work upon. If we understand what we hear we shall be apt to remember it, and the better if it be strengthen'd by short and plain Arguments laid down in an orderly and regular Method : and that is the Part incumbent on the Hearer, and the chief Business of the Audience.

Let me therefore understand from you in what Manner I propos'd to proceed in treating on the Beatitudes, that I may find whether you have edify'd as fully as

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I design'd by conceiving the whole System I was to go upon.

*P.* I shall readily do it as far as my Memory serves ; and wherever I am deficient, I hope you will put me right, that I may both edify my self and do you Justice.

I observed that you open'd your Discourse with shewing the Importance of the Subject you had taken in hand ; which was to consider and explain the Nature of those Christian Graces and Virtues which would not fail to entitle us to God's Blessing. That this was the first part of our Saviour's divine Sermon, which he deliver'd as the Principles, or as you say, the Institutes of all Gospel Learning. That having chosen his Apostles, and called them to a ministerial Service under him, he herein gives them a short summary of Christian Doctrines, which to explain and recommend to Mankind, was the Nature of that Office to which they were elected. That because a Notion had prevailed amongst the *Jews*, that the Messiah was to appear as a Prince of this World with Power and Authority, which was contrary to the

Gal. 3. 8. Design of his Mission, *in whom all Nations of the Earth were to be blessed*, Gentiles as well as *Jews*, therefore he had

had chosen his Apostles not out of the highest, but rather out of the meanest of the People; and that they should not be scandaliz'd hereat, he tells them plainly that no less than despising this World, <sup>Mat. 16.</sup> that is, taking up his Cross, was the on-<sup>24.</sup>ly way to be blessed and happy in him. For this Reason therefore to lead them out of that vain Expectation, he begins his Sermon with these Beatitudes, and shews them what Blessedness is, and that *Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the King-* <sup>1 Cor. 15.</sup> *dom of God.* That Remission of Sins, <sup>50.</sup> Salvation and Life everlasting was that Blessedness which his faithful Servants and Followers were to expect, and these were to be obtain'd only by Perfection of Life and Manners. That temporal and carnal Felicity were the least they were to hope for by the Messiah's coming, and that *his Kingdom was not of this World.* That <sup>John. 18.</sup> *they were not to be justified before God* <sup>36.</sup> *by the Works of the Law of Moses, but* <sup>Gal. 2.16.</sup> *by Faith in him,* and therefore they were so far from reaping any worldly Glory or Dominion, that they were to expect Troubles and Persecutions to follow them for his Name's sake. But for all this they were to know and be assured, that the End of their Faith wou'd not be short of true Felicity, not carnal and transient, but



but spiritual and everlasting. And for the Consolation of all those who should endeavour after Christian Perfection, it was enough to say, that the Grace of God and Remission of Sins, was both the Shield and Sword to defend and conquer in a Christian Warfare : For either these would mitigate our present Sufferings, or strengthen our Minds by Patience and Hope in God's Promises, so that for enduring Tribulations and Persecutions for a Time, they should have their Reward at last in Everlasting Life and Glory.

*D.* I perceive you have sum'd up well enough my Observations on the End and Design of our Saviour Christ Jesus, in publishing a Blessing unto all those who shou'd renounce the World, and all the Enjoyments of this Life, and be contented to suffer Persecutions and even Death it self for his Name's sake. For this being the stumbling Block of Offence to the *Jews*, it was necessary he should first remove their false Notions of him, and therefore he chose this way of Consolation at the Beginning of his Sermon, both to set them right in the Principles of Christianity, and to qualify those self-denying Doctrines with the Promise of Blessings.

But

But said I nothing of the different Manner of *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke* in setting down these Beatitudes?

*P.* Yes. I remember you told us that *St. Luke* is shorter in his Relation, than *St. Matthew*, and doth not mention so many in Number; but then that is not material, because the whole may very well be comprehended under so many as he hath taken notice of. For in pronouncing *Christ's Blessing* to those spoken of by him, he shews the full scope of our Saviour's Design, namely, that we should not confide in things of this World for Happiness, but in the Perfection of our own Nature, and in the superior Qualifications of our own Understanding, Will and Affections. For our Saviour here speaks in general to all his Disciples and Followers of those Blessings which they are entitled to, by means of Christian Virtues, and not only to his Apostles in this first part of his Sermon, and then afterwards he is more particular in his Application to them. This general Part was what you propos'd to insist upon.

*D.* It was so. For to lay down a short summary of Christian Philosophy is all I design'd. This I thought might be well enough done by treating on the Beatitudes only. For whatever makes us blessed,

ed, makes us truly wise, and to have all we want and desire to make us happy. To make Men therefore acquainted with all those Graces and Perfections of their Nature, which will certainly qualify them for Happiness, is as much Gospel Learning as the Generality of Men need know to become good Christians: For, if they practise according to such Knowledge, and build their Faith upon that Foundation, surely they are in a safe way to Salvation!

Now these Christian Graces are the very first Principles of all Christian Learning; no less to be esteem'd than the Institutes and fundamental Ordinances of Christ. For altho' deliver'd in a persuasive Manner, to invite us by the Promise of Blessings, yet they are to be understood as unalterable Decrees and standing Laws, for transgressing of which we are as certainly liable to Punishment as sure of Rewards for obeying. 'Tis the way of all Lawgivers to institute a Body of Statutes and Ordinances as the common Law of the State under the Sanction both of Rewards and Punishments. And our Saviour Christ in the Beatitudes promulges his Laws under the Sanction of Blessings, that is, Rewards; but the Breach of them doth as necessarily imply the opposite Sanc-



Sanction, that is, Punishments. As we find elsewhere he doth in expresse terms signify to the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, against whom for the Breach of the Law of *Moses*, he frequently pronounces Woe, that is, Punishment. And that this Promulgation might be as universal as he cou'd make it, he thought was necessary, because he knew his Principles of Religion wou'd stand in some degree opposite to the Law of *Moses*, which in the Letter of it seems to enjoyn Obedience, more from a worldly and carnal than holy and spiritual Principle. And therefore our Saviour is said when he saw the Multitudes, he called his Disciples, sat down and taught; but not till then. For the Substance of his Doctrine being new to them, since he was to preach upon the intrinsic Excellence of Faith and pure Religion, and to place it in holy and sincere Intentions and Actions, more than in Modes and Forms of Address; a Doctrine so very opposite to the *Pharisees*; for that very reason it wou'd have been hard for his Apostles and Disciples to have acted under him with any Credit in promulging a Doctrine so new to the World, if the *Jews* themselves had not first heard it deliver'd out of his own Mouth in some publick Manner.

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The End, the immediate Design, the particular Season, and the manner of Delivery of this new Law being thus fully answered by Christ in this Sermon; let us proceed to the matter thereof, in the first Part of it, which is the Foundation of the whole and applicable to every one of his Disciples; and enquire into the Use and Meaning of each particular Grace and Virtue to which he hath promised his Blessing, as a Reward for conforming to that Duty which he hath declared to be his Will and Pleasure; that by these Means we may have a full Insight into those Laws which are truly Christian, and by which we are to govern and conduct our selves. These have all so necessary a Dependence, the one upon the other, that to fail in one Point is a Breach of the whole Law, so closely do they join together and explain one another, and therefore we are to understand them to be a compleat System of Christian Philosophy as well as Laws, and they will require all the Application both of our Reason and of our Will, to comprehend and execute them in a proper Manner.

Which is the first Christian Grace or Principle which hath the Promise of God's Blessing?

*P.*

*P.* Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

I remember your Observation on this spiritual Poverty, that as it was first mention'd, so it seems to be the Ground-work and Platform to build other Graces and Virtues upon.

*D.* My Observation is grounded upon this, that there must needs be some Preparation of Mind, before we can arrive at any true Notion of Christian Virtues. For to offer Doctrines of Christianity to Men who are enslaved in Sin, prone to Vice and often struggling under the Prejudice of sensual Pleasures, if there were not some Degree of Virtue and Religion first supposed to fix their Attention, would be only to preach as to the Winds in a Storm. For Nature let loose to the Extravagance of Passion is as wild as you can conceive any thing to be; and therefore must be first tamed by Methods preparative to receive Instruction; and when Reason has done its best, there will yet remain, without the Grace of God's Spirit co-operating with us, some rude and unpolish'd Appearances of sensual Appetites and Inclinations to impede and disturb us in our Christian Conduct; and the human Mind must be softened and tempered by a Poverty of Spirit, before it can receive any

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Spiritual Impressions. For the Ground must be first smooth'd and clear'd from Spots and Stains, before you lay on the Colours of Christian Graces, if you seek to come up to the true Resemblance of Religion, such as Christ has laid down in his Gospel; and this Poverty of Spirit is to the Mind, like a fair white Sheet, whereon you may easily put what Impression you please. The Difficulty is over of becoming truly Christian, so soon as you have brought yourself to be poor in Spirit; and therefore since without this you can never expect to be out of Danger of revolting from your Duty, or that other Graces and Virtues will follow, we may well call it the Ground-work and Platform to build Christianity upon.

How did I divide my Discourse in treating upon this Head?

*P.* In this manner. *First*, You propos'd to shew the Resemblance between moral Virtues and Christian Duties, and the Difference between them.

*Secondly*, To shew that this Spiritual Poverty is something more than a moral Virtue, something that raises the Soul higher in Perfection than Nature, without this divine Light, could possibly do.

*Thirdly*, To shew that it is the prime and necessary Principle, to teach us not only

only how to live well as good Men, but as good Christians, and to dedicate our selves to God's Service.

*D.* Begin then with the first, and shew me the Resemblance between moral Virtues and Christian Duties, and the Difference between them.

*P.* Herein lieth the Resemblance, in that they are both agreeable to the Will of God; the moral Virtues by the light of Reason, the Christian Duties by the light of Revelation. The first are binding by the Laws of Nature written in Man's Heart, the other by the Laws of Christ Jesus written in the Gospel. So that we cannot say they disagree in the Use to be made of them, for both serve the Ends of Religion; but in the Certainty and Knowledge we have of their Efficacy and Power to fulfil the Will of God there is surely a Difference between them. For before the Revelation of the Gospel we cou'd not have that Assurance of Ability in us to please God, either from the natural Knowledge of him, or of the Worship which he expected; and consequently we went about our Duty with more Doubts and Uncertainty, upon the Principles of natural Religion, than on the Principles of Christianity. For the Gospel discovers much more clearly the

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## *The Blessings of*

Conformity of these Duties to the Will of God, offers divine Assistance for the better Performance of them, and excites us Christians to it by Motives more powerful than the best Morality, or the Law of Nature doth.

But I would be glad you would open this matter a little more fully, for I find there is some Difficulty in distinguishing between them.

*D.* I shall do it with what Brevity I can; for this is a Point of an intricate Nature, as you well observe, and therefore requires a clear and full explanation.

*First,* You are to understand then that there are some Actions which are good and necessary in themselves; and whether there were or were not any Revelation from God, these wou'd be still binding and obligatory upon Account of their own intrinsick Good which is inseparable from their Nature, and therefore are always to us matter of Duty and eternally necessary. Such as Respect and Obedience to Parents and Governors, Temperance and Sobriety in regard of our selves, Humanity and Charity in regard of our Neighbors. These are called Moral and are founded upon Principles of Nature.

*Secondly,* There are other Actions which are good when commanded by sufficient



ficient Authority, which without it wou'd be deem'd indifferent; and when this Command is from God, they are term'd religious and not moral; such as Sacrifices and the Rites and Ceremonies of the Mosaic Worship. These last having nothing in them of real Worth or Goodness more than by being appropriated to Religion by a divine Command, stand upon a mutable Foundation, and the same Authority which gave them sanction may take it away at Pleasure. And accordingly we find that God thought fit to change and abolish the old way of *Jewish* Worship by Sacrifice and Ceremonies, because they were but positive Ordinances by him appointed to serve the present Circumstances of the Church, barely typical, and therefore mutable in their first Institution.

*Thirdly*, There are other Actions also which are of the same moral Nature with the first, and moreover depend upon positive Institution and the Authority of God for the clearer Manifestation of his divine Will. Such as those moral Actions requir'd by express Commandment of Christ in the Gospel. And these are called Christian, and founded chiefly upon Principles of Grace.

## *The Blessings of*

As to those positive Institutions also in the Gospel, which are purely religious and in part mysterious and not plainly moral, such as the Two Sacraments and the Obligation of praying to God in the Name and through the Mediation of Jesus Christ, these are out of the Question, for we are only to consider such Actions as are moral, and therefore these religious Actions which depend upon divine Authority do not come before us.

The Agreement and Resemblance of these moral Actions, whether natural or Christian you will readily conceive, in as much as they conspire together to serve the ends of Religion and to execute the divine Will. But the Difference between them is not so easily seen or understood, because they are the same Actions going only through different Hands, and the good and evil in them is either according to their Conformity or Disformity to the Will of God, which is the same rule of judging a religious Action by on the Principles of natural and reveal'd Religion.

The only way of distinguishing them is, by the Power and Efficacy which we perceive to be in them, by a different manner of Assurance in the one Sense and in the other. For tho' Religion hath a sure and deep Foundation in the natural

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ral Understanding of Mankind, without the help of Revelation, yet certainly that Knowledge we have of God's Nature, and his divine Will is much enlarg'd by the Christian Dispensation, and we have a clearer Light thereby to discover our Duty, to act with greater Certainty and to put it beyond doubt now, what is *the* Rom. 12. *good and acceptable and perfect Will of<sup>2</sup>. God*; and the Motive also of supernatural Assistance in doing his Will, and of eternal Rewards and Punishments, is a farther Encouragement and Assurance to persevere in our Duty.

It is most certain if we had no Revelation at all from God, yet we should have been under an Obligation of Obedience to the Laws of Nature, and to the Practice of moral Duties; we should by Nature, as the Apostle St. Paul has it, *do* Rom. 2. *the things contained in the Law, we<sup>14</sup>. having not the Law, are a Law to our selves*. But this Law is no way abridg'd, and the natural Obligation is made stronger by the Gospel. For will any Man say, that it is enough for us now to do the moral Duties from the same Principle of Religion, implanted in the Mind of Man, alike extensive to Heathens as well as Christians? Have we not a clearer view of God's Nature, and our own Sufficiency



ficiency to fulfil the divine Commandments of God, and a larger Capacity to refine upon moral Virtues, and to do a moral Action in a more holy and perfect manner, from a Principle of Love and Gratitude to Christ Jesus, our Redeemer? Can we now have any manner of Doubt that God will accept our Service, when it is the Result of all our Desires and Endeavors upon a Gospel Principle, to please him and to imitate his Goodness and Beneficence to Mankind? A good moral Man without the Knowledge of the Gospel must fall vastly short of a good Christian in any religious or moral Duty, since he knows but little of the Nature and Excellence of God, so as to imitate him in Universal Charity, or to serve him out of pure Love and Gratitude, or even to worship him with any comfortable assurance in that manner, which is most agreeable to his divine Will.

The Religion of a moral good Life founded on the bare light of Nature, without Revelation consists in no more than this, to act in Conformity to the Nature of Things, and the Order of the Universe; because we ourselves are sociable Creatures, therefore to order our Manners, so as never to interfere with the publick good of the Community. This Regard to  
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publick Good, is the Object of moral Virtues, and the temporal Advantages which follow, are all the Reward the moral Man hath to depend upon with any certainty; whereas the Object of Christian Virtues is God himself, as well as universal Love to Mankind, and eternal Life and Happiness the Reward. And in this Sense, Christian Virtues are founded in Faith, or the Belief of God's Promises. This is one Reason why so great a Value is set on Faith in the Gospel, as being the Source and Foundation of Christian Virtues.

Morality is the Law of Nature, and can go no farther than Nature leads; but God did not so fully declare himself in the Book of Nature, as to need no farther Explanation; for a future State is so feebly proved without Revelation, that the greatest Masters of Reason rather wished it true, than were fully convinced of the certainty of it by any Arguments they cou'd frame, which amounted to no more than a Probability. The Hope therefore of a happy future State cou'd work but feebly in Proportion to the weakness of their Arguments. But they demonstrably saw that Virtue tended to the Good of Society, and corresponded with the Order of the Universe, and the Dignity of their own Being: and therefore

fore it was reasonable to imagine that it must be the Will of God, that all things shou'd preserve that Decency and Harmony, which is convenient and necessary for our well-being in Life; for that seems to be their principal Intention, Design and Motive in all their virtuous Actions. But Christians act on higher Views and Motives more truly religious, namely, Obedience to God, and Faith in the Promises of future Rewards. For this is now become a clear and uncontroverted

Heb. 6.

11. Point of Christian Learning: *without this Faith, it is impossible to please* or obey him, he himself having declared that it is the Foundation of those Promises. Virtuous and moral Actions, no doubt, are well pleasing in the Sight of God, but what have they to do with Faith, which is a divine Principle; they cannot make a Man more perfect than he is by Nature, which Faith can do. So that there is a great Difference between a good Christian in the Exercise of the same Duties, and one that acts only by the light of natural Reason; and the Difference lies in the Reception the one is to meet with from God above the other, or the Power and Efficacy of the same Actions offer'd from a more holy Principle in the one than in the other.



the other. For the Virtue and Morality of the natural Man doth but in a low degree express his Regard to God, when compared with the Significancy and Sufficiency of Christian Behavior; and whether in the Heathen-World, God will or will not accept that inferior Degree of Service and Worship, and apply it as a true Performance of the Condition on Man's Part towards his Salvation, we cannot say with any Certainty, tho' we may charitably hope it, but if he does, we certainly know it can be only for the Sake and Merits of our Redeemer Christ Jesus.

*P.* Can we call any one a virtuous Man and not religious?

*D.* In some Sense we say there may be Virtue without Religion, but there never can be Religion without Virtue. That is, natural Religion, which consists in a Life of Virtue and Morality, may conduct us well enough in matters of Duty towards our selves and our Neighbor, but in matters of Duty towards God, it may prove deficient, on account of false Conceptions of the Nature and Worship of God. If you mean therefore by religious, only bare Worship according to a Man's Knowledge and Belief, it is hard to say any virtuous Man is not religious;

ligious; but if by religious, you mean a true and obedient Servant of God acting up to that Knowledge which he may and ought to have by the Light of Reason and Revelation, doubtless, there are many great Pretenders to Virtue who are not religious. For there is nothing so common as for those who cannot bring themselves to comply with those self-denying Ordinances of the Gospel, to conceive more than ordinary Sanctity in natural Religion and moral Righteousness, to form false Notions of God, and adapt a Religion of their own making, to their vain Conceits that have no Foundation, either in Reason or Revelation. For when Men lead such Lives, that they cannot give a good Account of themselves according to the Purity of the Gospel, what wonder is it that they fall into some ridiculous Scheme to lull the Conscience.

*P.* I perceive then that tho' Virtue and Morality are good Principles, yet since the Gospel hath discovered to us the Knowledge of our Redemption through Christ, they are far from being the whole of Religion.

*D.* It was found by Experience that they alone were insufficient to correct the Errors and Affections of our deprav'd Minds,

Minds, and therefore God vouchsaf'd us the glorious Light of revealed Religion, more particularly of his Gospel in these later Ages, to oblige us to such Acts of Worship as he hath instituted by Christ, and to the Practice of such holy Duties as are in their Nature suitable to the Excellence of so divine a Being as God is now revealed to be, and to the Improvement and Perfection of such Christian Knowledge. Such as Poverty of Spirit, Meekness, universal Charity, Holiness, Purity of Heart, and other like Christian Virtues. This is the Christian Philosophy taught us in the Gospel. Altho' Virtue and Morality be good Lessons, there is something of more sublime Divinity, to be learnt by every good Christian; something of the true Nature of God and the Excellence of our own Souls. These are spiritual Illuminations resulting, not from the Powers of Reason, which are short of these Conceptions, but from the superior Dictates of God himself, by those extraordinary Manifestations of his divine Nature, which he hath given us in this last Revelation of Christ Jesus.

*P.* I very well conceive that the Gospel doth distinguish between Virtue and Morality and Christian Institutions; and that there is much more in being a good Christian, than in being a good moral Man;



Man; and that tho' the one may entitle me to Blessings here on Earth, yet without the other, it can give no manner of Title to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us go on to the next Head.

**D.** The Method to proceed in requires in the *Second Place*, that you be more particular as to that single Christian Virtue now before us. Shew me therefore how you conceive that this Poverty of Spirit, which is according to the Gospel Institution, and will give us this Title as our Savior hath assur'd us, is something more than a moral Virtue, something that elevates the Soul in its Approaches towards Perfection much higher, than the Light of natural Reason alone is able to do.

**P.** This Christian Virtue as it is the first in Order so it seems to be the same in Excellence, and to yield more holy Fruits than any other, for it disposes the mind to trust in God only, to depend upon him for Blessings; and what other Grace is there can cultivate the Mind to such a degree of Perfection, to receive the supernatural Assistance of the divine Spirit, as this Trust and Confidence in him? Much more Good it hath in it than to rectify our Manners under the Notion of Humility, for that puts us but into the proper Condition or Place where we are by

by Nature; but Poverty of Spirit considers this natural Modesty of Temper in another Light, and Christ Jesus by special Favor which he hath promis'd to all who are in this poor Estate, raises us above our Merits and puts us in a State of Grace; in the Assurance of which we are far from desponding of our low Condition, but have the higher Expectations of divine Assistance, by reason that we place our whole Sufficiency in God alone. This Depression of the Spirit as to worldly Considerations raises it higher as to spiritual Things, and therefore it goes something nearer in its Approaches towards Perfection, because it seems to aim at no less than Union with God himself. But if you would put this matter in the Words you delivered from the Pulpit, I don't doubt but to have a more distinct Notion of God's Grace co-operating with this Christian Virtue.

D. I think you need but little Instruction more to satisfy you in this Point, but if a Repetition of what I have said may be of service, you shall have it freely.

I told you, as I remember, that we are accountable for moral Actions by the Light of Nature. For the World would be in a State of War, if Men were not  
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convinced by the Dictates of right reason, that all Actions against natural Righteousness and the good of Mankind, were to be accountable somewhere or other. To be sober and temperate, chaste and contented, we plainly understand to be Duties we owe to our selves; to be just and righteous, benevolent and charitable, to be Duties we owe to others; and yet all these have something of Religion in them also. For that all should be done which is fitting and most convenient to the Preservation and well-being of God's Creatures in such a manner as is consistent with the well-being of the Universe, is a Conclusion that necessarily follows from our natural Conceptions of the divine Nature, as it answers the ends of Providence; and to do otherwise appears to lay a restraint upon our very Nature and to involve us in some selfish Guilt; which shews that there is naturally some secret Impulse of Religion in us. And altho' all this be good and in part religious, yet there is a necessity for another Law to improve this Law of Nature. For in respect of the corrupt Estate of Mankind and the Perfections of the Deity, there is so vast a difference, that there could be no Conformity in our Worship answerable to the relation between God and Man, were



were there not some Revelation from God himself to instruct us in what manner we are to serve him. If God had not plainly told us in his Gospel, that spiritual Poverty is a religious Institution, which is able to entitle us to the Kingdom of Heaven, we might still be in the dark about it, notwithstanding the best light of Nature, or Rules of Morality. For altho' a good moral Man by the Dictates of plain Reason doth certainly know that Humility is a Virtue, and conduceth much to his Happiness in Life; yet a Poverty of Spirit in the Gospel sense, is vastly more low than Humility in a Moral. 'Tis to level all our self-Conceptions to the lowest Estate of human Creatures; to become as little Children, that is, impotent and insufficient of our selves to think or do any good thing, small and despicable in our own Eyes, intent and dependent upon our heavenly Father in all our Thoughts, Words and Actions. For knowing as we do now by the Revelation of the Gospel the Mystery of our Redemption thro' Christ, we know that there is not the least Sufficiency in us to merit Salvation, and therefore that the best Perfections of human Nature, have nothing in them of real Worth and Value with God, and that all the very best of us can boast of, is an In-

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terest in Christ Jesus, who has promised a Blessing to all those who are poor enough in Spirit, to place their Sufficiency in him only, and consequently to have no Thoughts of themselves higher than the common Notions we have of Infancy and Childhood.

*P.* But could not Humility, which is a modest Restraint of all Desires of embracing Honors and Reverence due to personal Merit, which is often a Matter of great Prudence, and consistent enough with moral Virtue, answer sufficiently the ends of Religion, as well as this Poverty of Spirit, which in some Sense, seems to debase the human Mind, and to make a Man think more unworthily of himself than he deserves?

*D.* No. Because it is a mistake to think there can be any merit in us, in respect of God. For all the Good we can possibly be possess'd of by a Habit of Virtue, is not so meritorious as to compensate for all the Evils of Sin and Guilt, which must certainly be put to our Account if we depend upon our own Sufficiency; for it can only in part amend some Frailties of our Nature, and can never make us perfect before God, so as to do him Service and Reverence in the manner he expects. For altho' the Virtue of  
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Humility might indeed teach us the Necessity of revering God, as a Being supreme, and consequently worthy of Adoration from his Creatures; yet the manner of doing it by a Poverty of Spirit, with a heart truly humble and lowly as a Disciple of Christ Jesus, without the Light of the Gospel, would have been too refined a Notion of Religion, and too high an Elevation of the Soul to arise from any thing of plain Morality; or the utmost Proficiency of human Reason. No less than Christ's own express Declaration that it is necessary, in as much as it appears now to be the Ground-work and Foundation of other Virtues and Perfections which are to be born of his Spirit, could have led us into that divine Knowledge; nor could we have conceiv'd how such an entire change of Life was necessary to the sincere devoting our selves to God and his Service. A Christian therefore must be humble, not so far only as will answer the ends of Prudence, Decency in Life and Improvement of Manners, but also in such a holy way as becomes one that is born of the Spirit to serve the ends of Religion; and if no less than emptying our selves of all vain and fruitless Notions of our own Qualifications and Virtues will do it, we must seek to alter our very



Nature, and change our very Hearts to make our Humility descend to a Poverty of Spirit, in the Gospel Sense, that by this kind of spiritual dying to the World, we may be able to live to God, dwell in Christ, and Christ in us.

*P.* You have much strengthen'd my Conceptions of this Matter, and I take your Explication to be full enough to convince us that spiritual Poverty is something more than a moral Virtue, is something that elevates the Soul to a greater Pitch of Perfection than the Light of Nature and Reason alone is capable of doing: Which was the *Second* Head of your Discourse. I shall now go on to the *Third*, To shew that this Poverty of Spirit is the first necessary Christian Principle, not only tending to make us lead good and virtuous Lives, as an honest moral Man ought to do, but to oblige us to dedicate our selves to God and to his Service only.

*D.* You must divide this Head into two Parts,

*First*, Shew me how this spiritual Poverty is the first and necessary Principle of Christianity, and then, *Secondly*, How it obliges us to dedicate our selves to God and to his Service only?

*P.* I begin with the *First*. This Poverty of Spirit is the first and necessary Principle

ciple of Christianity. It is the first, because it smoothes the way for other Graces to succeed. It brings down the Pride of Nature to a true sense of its own Weakness, and disposeth us to seek and look about for Help, and that if human means fail, we are to go on 'till we gain something that is divine to rest upon, and to embrace every Opportunity of receiving Strength and Help from God.

So likewise as to the Necessity of it. That which banisheth all flattering Delusions of this World, and puts us in a Station of seeking after divine means for Salvation, and is the Ground and Foundation of other Christian Graces, must be highly necessary: for how could we attempt to express our selves in godly Sorrow, or Meekness, to hunger and thirst after Righteousness, to shew a merciful Temper, be pure in heart, and peace-makers, and to rejoice that we are reviled and suffer Persecution for Righteousness-sake, if our Minds be not first prepar'd by due Notions of our poor Estate to think meanly of our selves and confide altogether in God's Promises.

*D.* Shew me now *Secondly*, How this Poverty of Spirit implies a Dedication of our selves to God and to his Service only.

P. As it tends to make us have the meanest Thoughts of our selves, so also doth it raise in us the highest and noblest Conceptions of God and his divine Nature, purifies and strengthens our Desires after spiritual Things, and brings Heaven and Happiness to our view in such a manner, as to make us say with *David*, *My Soul longeth, yea even fainteth for the Courts of the Lord; my Heart and my Flesh crieth out for the living God*. Such zealous Affection as this can end in nothing less than a free Dedication of ourselves to God and to his Service only. He that cannot have any Peace or Rest in any thing that is not divine, must of course put himself into some Method to answer his Expectations, and what other can that be but the Service of God? For under this notion of poor in Spirit, there is implied no ease of Mind, no relish of Pleasure but in God; in Obedience to his Will and Commands, and in holy and heavenly Contemplations: and therefore he is never content with himself unless, after leaving all the Enjoyments of this World as not worth his Care, he enters upon a new manner of Life, devotes himself to God and heavenly things, and uses all his Endeavors to prepare himself for a blessed



bleſſed Union with him in the Kingdom of Heaven.

*D.* You ſee therefore in this Eſtate of ſpiritual Poverty, that we ſuppoſe nothing in this World is fit to entertain us with any true Content. That Riches and Honors are but Snares, Wiſdom and Policy but difficult ways of Addreſs to Men, and Pleaſures and Diversions a ſort of Poiſon to the Soul, to make it dead to all Taſt and Reliſh of ſpiritual Happineſs. That the Earth it ſelf for our ſake is curſt with Thorns and Briers, and the Seaſons of the Year are inconstant and changeable, purely to encrease the Toil and Labor of Mankind, and therefore all Thoughts of Reſt and Repoſe are to be poſt-poned, till we have finiſh'd our Courſe in this World.

That there is a Change of Life which Chriſtian Poverty of Spirit always aims at, a Reformation of our own Nature, a Purification of our own Souls, and even an Union with God himſelf. Here in this World we are always moved by our Senſes, they generally judge for us in the preſent and ordinary State of Things, ſo that the natural Man forgets often that there is another State of Life, which he muſt enter upon one time or other: but this Poverty of Spirit teaches that even in this Life we are to prepare for it. For

John. 14.  
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the manner of rising to this blessed Union with God is what no one acquainted with the Gospel can be ignorant of. *I am the Way, the Truth and the Life*, saith our blessed Savior, *no man cometh to the Father but by me*. It is Christ who teacheth us Lessons of new Life, of invisible Blessings to be hoped for and expected thro' him, in that *Life which is hid with Christ in God*, as St. Paul expresses it. The Senses feel nothing of this State, and therefore it is hid to us at present; but by Faith and Hope, which are Graces built upon the Foundation first laid in us by a Poverty of Spirit, we are able to change the present prospect of Things, and to make that eligible which is now grievous to Flesh and Blood, and to turn our whole Life into a Sacrifice of all the Enjoyments of this World, in order to purchase that divine Union with God, which our new Birth in Christ will prepare us for.

This is a State which implies much more Conformity to the Will of God than we can pretend to by any Number of moral Virtues, which the natural Man is apt to build too much upon; it implies no less than the full and free Offering of our selves to God, like a Soldier of Christ, one that hath overcome the World, conquered all the Poms and Vanities of it, and now comes

comes with Joy and Gladness to dedicate the Spoils, and his whole Life and future Service to the divine Disposal.

*P.* But is not a Habit of Virtue Preparation enough for the Reception of divine Grace?

*D.* I confess, without a Habit of Virtue, there can be no Sanctity in us to make us fit for such a Sacrifice, and to be well disciplined in Morality is a large step to that Perfection of Life, which will draw down God's Grace, and make his Spirit co-operate with our Endeavors; but as Christianity sanctifies our Manners, by adding to every virtuous Action somewhat of more perfect Obedience to God's Will, in respect of higher and more spiritual Notions of the End we aim at, so it gives us even here a Taft and Relish of the Kingdom of Heaven; and therefore our Minds seem to be better dispos'd and cultivated to receive an Increase of Grace. So that I can't deny but that Morality improv'd by the light of Christian Knowledge will produce Holiness and Piety in a Gospel sense, or that Men being so enlighten'd and influenc'd by such Principles will find it as easy to be holy as to be good: Holiness and Goodness in Man being Terms convertible when there is a Christian Spirit to guide him. But then to be led by this Spirit



Spirit to renounce the World, and to give our Affections a contrary Bent and Turn towards heavenly Things, is to make Holiness and Piety, which is the Effect of the Operations of this Spirit, and not Virtue and Morality the Measure and Rule of all our Actions. Whether a Habit of Virtue will have that Influence always, to draw the Spirit to co-operate with Man is more than we can tell, but we are sure that a Poverty of Spirit will do it, because it answers Christ's own Institution, and the Purpose of God according to Election, and hath the Promise of Blessing in the Kingdom of Heaven. We dare not conclude so favourably of Virtue and Morality, which must, without the divine Assistance, fall as short of this, as temporal Rewards are of eternal; and the Consequences are no way so noble and divine; because the most that can follow on a Life of Virtue, abstracted from Religion in a Christian sense, is a certain Complacency of Mind to have done what rational Agents are bound to do, by the plain Dictates of natural Reason, but what more follows from a Christian Principle of Poverty of Spirit, as the Man of Virtue without Christianity could have no Title to it, so there is so much higher Notions of Divinity in it, that he seems to want even

even a Capacity of working up the Soul, without the Influence of the Spirit, to have any just Images or spiritual Notions of it. But what Inferences did I make from these Heads of Christian Doctrine?

*P.* There were several.

*First,* You infer'd, that no degrees of Devotion and Piety extraordinary by retiring to a Cloister in the modern way, but the true and right Performance of necessary and Christian Duties, in a religious Conduct of our selves in every Profession and State of Life, shews true Poverty of Spirit or that Christian Perfection which is recommended by our Savior. For altho' Monckery by some of the ancient Fathers be spoken of with Respect and Regard, yet in the first Ages, you say, it was by no means such as is now profess'd; for at this day it is no more than a supercilious and conceited Pretence to Humility under colour of Religion, with an affected Gesture and Garment of mean Appearance, accompany'd with profess'd Idleness and Disregard to Industry. For in ancient times the good Monks lived upon the work of their own Hands, and some were able to do pious and charitable Acts by the Produce of their own Labor; and that too without claiming or pretending

pretending to any Perfection or Sanctity in their choice of such a Life.

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**D.** One of our great Divines says, the Institution was excusably good; but for all that it remains a Question with some not easy to be solv'd, Whether any Separation from the World by whole Societies of Men incorporated together in an unactive way of Life, under the Countenance of the Church, be Christian and according to evangelical Rules of the Gospel. For God has certainly given every Man his own Talent, not to lap it up in a Napkin, but for common Benefit to himself and others. It seems a sort of robbing the Publick not to put it out to some Use; and no professing views of superlative Service in any other way than he hath commanded, will make the Exchange of any Works of Supererogation answer for Gifts bestow'd by him for ordinary and Christian Purposes, or make what is so very like to spiritual Pride, to become Poverty of Spirit. For this alone is not that Christian Virtue which includes all others, altho' it be indeed the Foundation whereon other Graces and Virtues stand in christian Perfection. To be Peace-makers, to be merciful, to hunger and thirst after Righteousness and the like, are all of them necessary Virtues, which every Christian is oblig'd



oblig'd to exercise himself in : And whether the present Cloisters are well ordered to afford us many exemplary Instances of consummate Poverty of Spirit, is much to be doubted.

What is the *Second* Inference I made ?

*P.* That it is the Nature of spiritual Poverty to deliver us from the Plagues and Miseries of our present State of Life, and prepare us for a State of Blessedness hereafter.

The Plagues and Miseries of this Life proceed either from want of Health or want of Liberty in Person or Circumstances in respect of our outward Condition, or want of Contentment in respect of our inward State of Mind. In all these several respects Poverty of Spirit greatly tends to deliver and set us free from Misery.

*First,* As to want of Health. Physicians tell us that there are many more Distempers which proceed from Fulness than from Emptiness, and with them we know that the general way of treating most Distempers is by pulling down and emptying the Body ; the Poor in Spirit therefore, not being suppos'd to pamper themselves are less subject and liable to sickness by means of this Christian Virtue. It is apt in its Nature to remove those Impediments to Health which generally follow on a contrary Course, by recommending

commending always moderate Diet, Sobriety and Temperance in our way of Living; and if we would try, we should find much less is necessary to support Life in a good State of Health, than is generally taken in common Sustenance by good and sober Men. Then as to want of Liberty either in Person or Circumstances, this spiritual Poverty teaches us the best way of delivering and freeing our selves from the Danger of falling into such Miseries of Life, as it naturally tends to exempt us from those Evils which generally fall upon Men of a contrary Spirit. For the usual Causes of Restraint of the Liberty of Men's Persons, or the Narrowness of their Circumstances, is from the Violation of Laws, in being contentious or injurious, or in meddling with Affairs which do not belong to them; for if they fought for no more than what they were intitled to by Birth or Education, they would all have sufficient to make Life tolerably easy; but the Poor in Spirit are so far from multiplying or enlarging the common Evils of Life by any Breach of the Laws, or dealing injuriously or meddling with others Affairs impertinently, that they always think they have enough of their own. But as to the inward State of Mind, they are always in perfect Peace, and are out

out of all manner of Danger of falling into that greatest Plague and Misery of Life, a discontented Spirit, never to be satisfy'd with our Condition; for whether the Poor in Spirit have either by Birth or Fortune, more or less of the good Things of this World, they are always satisfied, because it is always the same thing to them to be rich or poor, high or low, in Esteem or Disesteem in this World; and they measure not their Happiness by temporal but spiritual Things, not by the Affluence of Goods of Life but Gifts of Grace.

The Consequence of being thus deliver'd from the Miseries of Sickness, of Restraint upon our Persons or Circumstances in a great measure, but certainly from a discontented Mind by this Christian Virtue, which are the common Plagues of this Life, is a comfortable Preparation for a State of Blessedness in another. For hereby we are at full Liberty to proceed in our Duty after a more holy and spiritual Manner, both by being freed from the outward Incumbrances of worldly Affairs, and inwardly from the natural War in our Members, of the Flesh against the Spirit, having cast off the Corruptions of the Old, and put on the New Man,



Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness.

**D.** You see that this Christian Principle gives us true Notions of the Evils of this, and the Happiness of the next Life. It points out to us the Excellencies we are to aim at, and the Vanity and Presumption of taking up with less than God requires of us. It makes us acquainted both with him, and with that Spirit within us, which being created after his Image, makes us aspire to heavenly Things. Teaches that the World is a cursed Estate to be fond of, full of Marks of God's Displeasure, and a Vale of Misery; where the Lives of Men are expos'd to the Temptations of wicked Men and wicked Spirits; and that we are so frail by Nature, that if we escape the Tempter from without, and yet do fall in any sort short of this State of spiritual Poverty, we are sure to carry about one within us, in the Lusts of the Flesh and the evil Affections of a sinful and weak Body. As if by Nature God had contriv'd Man to be here as in a Wilderness, where Dreams of Pleasure, Fears and Dangers variously are dispos'd to agitate a fickle and inconstant Mind, so as to have no good Taste or Enjoyment of Life. Therefore the natural Condition of  
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Man without this Spirit of Christianity, plainly appears to be a State of Sickness and inordinate Affections, wherein we taste nothing but what inflames us, till Christian and Spiritual Poverty blots out the Ideas and Images of worldly Wisdom, levels the carnal Mind to the lowest Degree of Humility, and teaches us a Lesson of Christian Purity to reform our very Nature.

What is the *Third* Inference?

*P.* That Poverty of Spirit is a Christian Duty, equally necessary, and equally practicable in all States of Life, and that Mens different Professions, make no Alteration in it for the better or for the worse, provided they be good and honest. The Reason is, because high and low, rich and poor are equal in natural Affections and Abilities of Mind, and the difference between them in this World, is only in outward Circumstances; but outward Circumstances come not under the consideration of the Poor in Spirit, in any other manner than to despise them with a steddiness of Soul, so as to be mov'd in no respect by them. And therefore it makes no Alteration in the Mind, whether we have much or little to give up, since it is necessary to give up all; and no Profession or Condition of Life

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makes it more or less easy to comply with this Duty, if once we be thoroughly resolv'd, and the Purpose fix'd in our Hearts to enter upon this State of spiritual Poverty.

**D.** In this you see the Goodness and Wildom of Christ Jesus in his holy Institutions, that he should so equally accommodate a Dispensation to all Mankind, suitable to all Degrees and Circumstances, and that no one can have a greater or less Title to his Blessings, than as he is more or less perfect in his Obedience and Service. That he should lay the Foundation of Christian Virtues in one Method, and yet proportionate to every one's Abilities, that Man might be able to work out his Salvation more by Holiness of the Heart than other Means. For it matters not how much or how little Good we are able to do in the World, if we have acted up to our Duty in respect of God and our Neighbor, with a like Integrity of Heart. For altho' the external Acts of Love towards God and Man, in the Course of our Dealings in the World, may shew a Difference between Men of Business and Employment, and others of better Circumstances and more easy Estate in Life, yet provided they be all of like Integrity of Mind, they may be all alike equally said to love God.



God. For when this Poverty of Spirit is equal in them all, their Profession or Business in this Life, if it be innocent and righteous, will not make them differ in those Virtues which are influenc'd by it: The Christian Temper and Habit of Mind being the Root of all, tho' the Branches may differ and bear more Fruit, yet the Quality is the same thro' the whole. That is, if I have obtain'd that true Rectitude of Mind, of being poor in Spirit, in the Gospel sense, I may rest assur'd, tho' I have not equal Advantages in Life, of shewing how extensive my Love is, by many charitable Works, or other good Offices which God accepts as human Testimonies thereof; either because they have not fallen in my way, or because of the narrowness of my Circumstances; yet that holy Temper of Mind, which has begot in me such a Disposition to be poor in Spirit, has begot in me such a Spirit of Love also, that were I qualify'd and called upon to exemplify it by Acts, I cou'd make the light of my Works to shine before God and Man. Tho' I want the Ability, yet I do not want the Will to exercise any charitable Duty. And this must be no small Comfort to the poor in Spirit of all Conditions, to be assured that the outward Circumstances of Life are far from

Demonstrations of inward Piety. A Man need not want Charity, because he wants Riches; for the Heart and Mind joined to our Endeavors, are all that constitute the State of Christian Perfection.

What farther Inference did I make?

*P. Fourthly*, You mentioned one more. That as this Poverty of Spirit gives us a Title to the Kingdom of Heaven, so Heaven cannot possibly afford any Enjoyment or Blessedness to those who are destitute of it. For what is to be poor in Spirit, but to cast off the Amusements and Vanities of this World, to become as little Children, in all things depending on, and always doing according to the good Will of our heavenly Father? And if we go hence without this Spirit, where can we expect to find Entertainment to suit with our Corruptions? For there can be no Enjoyment any where without Conformity, and nothing is so opposite here as worldly Wildom and spiritual Poverty; and if the latter carries us to Heaven, it cannot be in company of the former: Or if it were possible to be so, Heaven would then appear to a Soul involv'd in worldly Cares, a Place quite out of its Element, where it could find nothing to tast or relish with any Satisfaction. For if a  
Man

Man can have no Pleasure here on Earth in spiritual Things, how shall he find any Enjoyment in that Place where he cannot see God, or enjoy him, by reason of those impure Imaginations, which he cannot divest Nature of, and where there is nothing of his own false Allurements to entertain him? To find rest to our Souls, we must first learn to be meek and lowly in Heart, or else Heaven surely will not be the Place to meet it in. For we may as well expect to enjoy a Heaven where Christ is not, as to go to Heaven where he is, without that lowly Spirit which he recommends. So far therefore as we have learn'd to imitate him in his Spirit and Temper, so far we carry with us a Heart conformable to heavenly Enjoyments, and if the Soul cannot rest at ease, where there is nothing like it self to entertain it, and nothing but spiritual Poverty can raise it to partake of spiritual Blessings, or form our Ideas or Images of Heaven to the Glory and Happiness thereof, we must first change and transform our Affections before we go thither, if we expect any Blessedness in such a Kingdom.

I cannot recollect that you deliver'd any other matter of Observation on the Head of this particular Beatitude.



*D.* Very likely I have not, or else you would have taken notice of it. But you see enough, I suppose, to convince you, that God hath chosen the foolish Things of the World to confound the Wise, in this Spirit of Christian Poverty. For generally Men do not see the Power of God, when it opposes their natural Passions and Inclinations. They are too apt to look upon themselves as somewhat greatly superior to other Parts of the Creation. They very readily conceive, according to *Moses* in the History, that they have Dominion large enough over the Creatures here below, but it is hard for them to know in what distance they stand from God, or to entertain a Thought of what small Proportion of Power they have in respect of him. To preach up Doctrines, to abase those Qualifications which Nature bestows they think is absurd, at least not necessary; to bridle their Passions strictly, or call their Sufficiency in the search of Good and Evil in Question, is an Offence to Reason; they naturally know no use of the Senses but to be led by them, and to tell them of any Danger in worldly Pleasures, is to affront their Experience, and to put them in a degree with the lower part of the Creation, who  
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have no Understanding. If one would judge by the carnal Lives of Men, they must surely think they have a just Title to all these Rights as the common Privileges of human Nature. This is the Doctrine which Nature teacheth. But what a contrary Lesson do we learn in the new Testament.

*They that are Christ's have crucify'd the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts.* Gal. 5. 24.

*Whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God, as a little Child, he shall not enter therein.* Mark. 10. 15.

*Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.* 1 Cor. 10. 12.

*In thy Sight shall no Man living be justified.* Ps. 143. 2.

*Set your Affections on things above, not on things of the Earth.* Col. 3. 2.

These, and a World of other Expressions of like import, contain a sort of Philosophy they do not understand; they cannot attain unto it, until they feel in themselves something of this Poverty of Spirit. Then they begin to raise their Understandings, to conceive of God and themselves in some better manner; and to find that it is necessary to imitate Christ here on Earth in this Spirit, that they may be able to enjoy him in Heaven; that they must, together with their cor-

rupt Bodies, leave behind them, before they go hence, all the Corruptions of a defiled Soul ; be as Fools to this World, that they may be wise as to their Salvation, poor in Spirit here, to be rich in Glory hereafter.



CHAP.



CHAP. II.

D. I Come now to the *Second* Beatitude.

*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

P. If I were not first instructed in that Christian Grace of Poverty of Spirit, I should think this a hard Lesson to learn; for does there not seem to be somewhat of Contradiction, between Blessedness and Mourning?

D. No doubt there does, if we consider the present time only; but I shall explain that matter to you, and then the sense will appear plain and obvious.

You understand that Joy and Sorrow always arise in the Mind, from the apprehension of some good or evil thing present or future, which we are zealously intent upon, and all our Passions, of what nature soever, when they are moved with any sort of Spirit, always turn upon these two Cardinal Points. Now these Passions serve as so many Spurs to push us on to the end design'd; and are naturally helpful and add to our Felicity, provided

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we keep them within due Bounds. For we find whenever we exert our selves, we are able to encounter great Difficulties with Success, even to make present Evils eligible, on account of the Prospect of future Good, and present Pleasures to be avoided, on account of the Dread of succeeding Evils; and all this by the bare Influence of our natural Passions of Hope and Fear, guided and conducted by our Reason. Joy and Sorrow therefore are the Consequence and Result of Actions produc'd by Reason, tho' executed with Passion; and yet it is not the Motion of the Mind under the Influence of Passion, where there is always something of Perturbation and Vehemence, but it is the Effect of that Motion, which putteth us either in a State of Joy or Sorrow: and this State is either good or evil to be suppos'd, from the Judgment that Reason makes of it on Account of the End, not of the Means; by ballancing Good and Evil together both as present and as future. So that things being thus weigh'd and consider'd, we cannot always call that State happy, where there is a shew of present Felicity, neither that unhappy, where there is present Misery; and therefore this Christian Doctrine of godly Sorrow being a Blessing, is no such Paradox as some may think,

think, if it be tried and examined by Reason, supported by the Revelation of the Gospel. But I confess there is a great deal of Christian Philosophy required to bring this to bear; for if the natural Man consider'd no more, than to ballance Good and Evil by the Course of Things in this World, as he might conceive them agreeable or disagreeable to the Will of God, by the Force of Reason only, the best moral Man would fall short of the true State of this godly Sorrow, which includes compunction of Heart and a loathing of our selves for Sins committed, together with a faithful Trust and Confidence in the Merits of a crucify'd Savior, for Remission of them upon our Repentance and Amendment of Life; because without the Revelation of Christ Jesus, how could he know all this is necessary? And therefore his Conceptions of Sorrow for Sin must be unequal to the Knowledge we receive by Gospel Learning; and for want of this Christian Philosophy, he could not see into the Necessity and Usefulness of this Mourning in the Gospel Sense, and consequently it would be hard for him to conceive there could be any Blessedness in it. But this Point being made plain by Christ's own Institution, 'tis easy now to reconcile present Sufferings so to our Reason,



Reason, as to make a proper use of them, and to stir up the Passion of godly Sorrow so far only, as to give us a true Sense of our Ingratitude towards God, and of the Misery of our sinful Condition, in order to make use of those Remedies which the Gospel prescribes, for the Recovery of the divine Favour, and for our future Blessedness and Well-being hereafter.

This Obstacle being removed, proceed now to the Proof of this Doctrine according to the Heads of my Discourse.

*P.* For the true Conception of the Necessity of this Duty of godly Sorrow, and reconciling it to our choice upon certain Trials and Occasions, you propos'd three Things.

*First*, To shew that there is a State of Jollity and Pleasure, which necessarily and in the end bringeth forth Sorrow and Repentance.

*Second*, That there is State of Sorrow and Repentance, which as necessarily and certainly bringeth forth Joy in the end.

*Third*, That it is the wise and Christian Part to prefer this sort of Sorrow before that other sort of Pleasure, as well from the Reason of the Thing, as from our Savior's Promise, that such shall be comforted.

*D.*

**D.** Shew me *First*, That there is a State of Jollity and Pleasure, which necessarily and in the end bringeth forth Sorrow and Repentance.

**P.** This is very easy to do ; for is it not the very State of us all in the Days of our Youth ? For we regard Pleasures so much and our Duty so little at this Season of life, that we are all forc'd one time or other sadly to repent of the many ill Courses we have taken, and the very least Reflection on those Days of inconsiderate Vanity and Folly must create in us a most sensible Sorrow.

**D.** We need not go far then, you see, to look for this State ; we need only take a view of the gay Manners of our Youth of both Sexes, in that incessant round of Pleasures which they are daily engag'd in : of whom to enquire, why all this extraordinary Expence both of Money and Time ? This perpetual Hurry from one Diversion to another ? the Answer is ready. This is our time of Life for Enjoyments of this Nature. We do but what our Fathers did before us ; suit our Diversions to our Years, and lose no time in enjoying them. This is a true, but a very sad account for a Christian to give of himself ! For do but observe in the Course of a few Years, what is the Consequence

sequence of all this: Nothing less than succeeding Misery and generally Want. That Portion and Inheritance which descends from the Father, and which the Son often grasps at with Greediness and Impatience, as the Food of his Extravagance, will not serve him as a continual Feast; may last perhaps so long as to teach him to feel his own Follies, to make him more wise, but also more miserable. When it is idly and profusely squander'd away in Pleasures and Diversions, so far is it from being a Fund of Content and Satisfaction, as was fondly imagin'd, that it becomes the Source and Fountain of all his Uneasiness. And therefore we may well conclude from the Inquietude of Mind, which generally succeeds such a life of Pleasure, from the great Loss of Time, from the Inaptitude to useful Business, and the necessary Cares of our well-being for the time to come, and often from a Multitude of Diseases contracted, that all sober Men of Understanding must grant, that the Follies and Vanities of Youth in the Pursuit of Pleasures and their State of Felicity, produce nothing but Sorrow and Repentance in the end. For when there is so much Life and Spirits stirring, as to know no end of Pleasure and Diversion, where will Youth stop in their im-



impetuous Course, till want and Misery have brought them to Reason? But from this youthful Giddiness, not much good Management can be expected: What say you therefore to those of advanc'd Years?

*P.* Even here it is most certain there is so much Care and Concern for the good things of this Life, and so much mixture of Pain with Pleasure, after we have obtained a good share of them for our Portion, that I do not see even those who have most, complain any thing less than others, of their want of many more Requisites to make them easy. For altho' they have all the World can give, they seem still to desire more and still complain. So that it is apparent and obvious to all Men who consider it, that your first Proposition is unquestionably true, that there is a state of Jollity and Pleasure, which bringeth forth nothing less than Sorrow and Repentance in the end. For surely there is no one rests contented with his State in this Life, so as to be perfectly satisfied, or at the end of his Desires; we commit so many Mistakes in the Pursuit of this or that thing, and after all when obtained, find it to answer so little to our Expectations, that we are apt often to re-  
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pent that ever we took any Pains about it.

*D.* You see then that when Youth is past, and you go farther into Life, view and observe that sedate turn of Thought to continue and preserve all the human Felicities, which the World offers to Men of Age and Experience, who have renounc'd all the Follies of Youth, and are old enough to be Masters of themselves; even here we find, that many live and enjoy the World in as high a manner, as the World can make it joyous to them, and yet have nothing but Sorrow and Repentance for their Portion. For to live in a course of worldly Pleasures and Diversions, is not perhaps so happy a State as most Men think; neither is to abound with the good Things of Life, a certain means to moderate or put an end to our Desires. For there is always such a mixture of Pain accompanying all our Pleasures, and such a restless desire of Change in every State of Life we are in, that a rational Man would be apt to doubt, whether it is possible to form any true Notion of real Happiness. Few Men, I believe, are so stoical in their Temper, as to feel no Degree of Dread and Fear, which blends it self with all our great concerns of Life. We tast nothing in Perfection, have nothing

thing in our Possession which we are sure of keeping or preserving for any long time: And what is ever changing or may change, is very far from what the mind of Man is apt to be contented with; and without true content, where is our Happiness? The more pains we take to know and to reflect upon our present State and Condition, the more Trouble and Sorrow is sure to follow. We cannot but think that a Creature such as Man is, endowed with rational Faculties to see and to contemplate the Works of Nature, and the Order of the Universe; how every thing therein is adapted to its proper Use, and seems to partake of Pleasures peculiarly adjusted to their several Natures and Degrees of Happiness; and in this view we behold also a World of things worthy our Admiration, of which we have no real Knowledge at all; when we consider this, I say, we cannot but be convinc'd, that sensual and worldly Pleasures and other good things of Life are poor Enjoyments, in respect of the Joys and Satisfaction which must necessarily follow on superior Degrees of Knowledge, which we find the present want of, to cause in us some share of Sorrow and Anxiety of Mind: and therefore that something yet re-

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mains to answer our Desires, to fill our Souls with Pleasure ; that better Part, which is ever aspiring after something more than what we yet see or feel, and which is capable both of knowing and relishing Pleasure without Pain, which our Bodies are not. That this World with all its Felicities about it, is not able to content but the worst part of us, and that but imperfectly and poorly ; that the other Part, of much superior worth, is left unsatisfied altogether, without any Felicity suitable to its Nature : Whereas to make a Man happy, so as to be in a state of perfect Joy, is to make both Soul and Body too partake of such Pleasures as correspond with both together, and which cannot be had in this World. This therefore is a great Mortification, and we must conclude that the State of Man here, whether we consider him in Youth or Age, is a State of Imperfection, as to any real Felicity. In the one, his Pleasures become his Pain, by an impetuous Temper and immoderate Passions : in the other he is either involved in unnecessary Cares, or under continual Sorrow and Trouble, that whatever offers for rational Entertainments and is courted for such, can never satisfy ; cannot in any measure answer our Expectations. That there is something of Gall  
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and Bitterness mixed with all the sweets of Life; and were that to be overcome, yet they are so flitting, so little under our command for any time, and so unequal to the Soul, consider'd either apart or in conjunction with the Body, that it only requires a few Years, after the Days of our Youth are over, to make us nauseate and renounce them altogether.

Thus it manifestly follows that there is a State of Jollity and Pleasure, which necessarily and in the end bringeth forth Sorrow and Repentance.

Shew me now that there is a State of Sorrow and Repentance, which as necessarily and certainly in the end bringeth forth Joy.

*P.* This is the State of Sorrow for Sin; when a Man considers what a frail Creature he is by Nature, and what a load of Guilt upon several Accounts will be added to his Charge, he will see cause enough of Sorrow to break his Spirit, and put him into a State of Mourning. But then this State is not without its Comforts: First, in that it is esteemed precious in God's Eyes; Secondly, in that it is the Forerunner of Repentance, and Thirdly, in that it tends directly to the Reformation of our Lives. For it is the general Method of God's dealing with Sinners, to move them to a Sense of their sinful Condition

by some outward Affliction; this he doth out of fatherly kindness, to teach them how to mourn, and to state their own condition truly with all its Incumbrances about it; and this naturally leads to the Consideration of our spiritual Estate, wherein we shall be sure to find much Deficiency in our Behavior, and are bound therefore to sorrow for it; and wherever we have fallen into actual Transgression, there to repent and hate our selves for it, and to amend our Lives for the future. This is truly a State of Sorrow; but then the Comfort we have, in being assured that we are under God's Favor for so doing, raises us up with Joy and Gladness, as if just then delivered out of some greater Calamity, and the present Compunction and Remorse of Mind is quite lost in the Expectation of future Felicity. So that this State of Sorrow doth not depress, but rather strengthen our Joy about heavenly things; for it fortifies our Hopes, teacheth us Patience under present Afflictions, and confirms us in our Endeavors after a better course of Life; calling upon us to confide in God's Promises, and to remember, that if our present Calamities be great, so is our Consolation in Christ Jesus.

2 Cor. 1.  
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*D.*



**D.** You see therefore 'tis not always good or wise, to form our Judgment from the present appearance of Things. For 'tis a certain Truth, that we are but incompetent Judges at the best of future Events, because, tho' we be sure that God creates nothing but for a good end, yet, we cannot see into all the ends of Providence, and must therefore often compute wrong when we measure things only by what we see. However, we do see and know so much of them, and of the amazing turns and changes of Life from good to evil and the contrary, that we ought never to judge any thing which happens to us, tho' at the present grievous, but as designed for our Benefit, if it be of God's ordering and not our own.

That many fall under Afflictions not of their own Contrivance, or by their own particular Demerit, surely we may grant without Offence to God or Religion; altho' on the other hand we are too apt whenever we are exercis'd with such Trials, to lay not half so much blame to our selves as we ought; for the very best of us have so much guilt to answer for, that were God extreme to mark all we do amiss, his Judgments would unavoidably follow us all in a much severer manner, so that we have all great and manifold

occasion to mourn daily. Surrounded as we are with so many Temptations and Trials, in all Seasons and in all Stations, to mourn, is only to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.

This is a godly Sorrow working Repentance not to be repented of: and when a Man is in such a State, he is always settling and making up his Accounts with God. He calls to mind all his Thoughts, Words and Actions, whereintoever he hath offended, and loaths himself for it. Sees how wretched a Creature he is for offending without Provocation, nay, sometimes against the Calls and Conviction of Conscience; what the Consequence of such presumptuous Sins is, and how extreme his Punishment must be to answer his Demerits; and therefore under all this Contrition he cannot but mourn his Offences and be sorry for his Sins. He laments the Unfaithfulness of his Stewardship over those Talents committed to his Charge, either in making no use at all of them, or in making very little, or perhaps sometimes putting them to a bad use.

Wherever he fails in these Particulars, he trembles at the Prospect and Approach of Vengeance, mourns and is willing to repent in Dust and Ashes. This is a State of Sorrow surely, but for all that it is  
such

such a State as a good Christian will not avoid for all the Pleasures of a wicked World. This is *to purge the Conscience* Heb. 9. *from dead Works to serve the Living* 14. *God.* To put our selves into such a State of Purity as will reconcile us to him through Christ's Blood. To consider our selves as Delinquents, flying to him for Mercy; *looking unto Jesus the Au-* Heb. 12. *thor and Finisher of our Faith, who for* 2. *the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross and despised the shame,* as the Apostle speaks. In following him in Humility and godly Sorrow we solace our selves with Peace of Conscience; and to be sure there is no greater State of Joy between this Earth and Heaven, than the Joy of a good Conscience; and altho' we be often exercis'd with Grief and Mourning before we can bring our selves to it, yet it pays us well afterward for all our former Trouble and Pains.

Tho' it requires a great deal of Mourning, of Sorrow and Repentance, to cleanse a polluted and defiled Conscience, yet when that is once compassed, the Labor and Sorrow is all over, and forgotten for Joy that we are come to a new Birth, to be regenerated into a new Life, preparing for a State of endless Felicity: where there shall be no Mixture of Pain



with Pleasure, nothing of a worse Change in our Condition: where also thro' the Assurance of Faith we shall have no less in view, than an endless Circle of Enjoyments, superior to all that we can either think or conceive to satisfy both Soul and Body too, so soon as ever we enter upon our glorified Estate. Since these are the Ends of this godly Sorrow, this Chastisement of weeping and mourning for our Sins, with a lively Displeasure against them, and also against our selves, expressed sometimes by voluntary Acts of Mortification and Self-denial; and when other Chastisements from the hand of God, are visibly found to baffle all our worldly Expectations, and so confound our Devices, in order to put us into a State of Trial and Temptation, to prove our Faith and other Christian Graces; since all this seemeth for the present grievous, and calls for all the Requisites of Submission and Resignation to the divine Will, yet nevertheless, let us not call it a State of Unhappiness, when afterward, according to the Apostle, *it yieldeth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness unto them which are exercis'd thereby.* 'Tis sure this is a work of Difficulty, but it makes a man easy ever after it, if he keeps up his Integrity and Innocence, altho' he be never out

Heb. 12.  
11.

out of fear and trembling lest he should miscarry.

*P.* But is not there some Fear of Dependancy in all this?

*D.* That is as a Man judges right or wrong of his Condition. If he hath no Christian Philosophy in him to ballance future Joys with present Evils, his Agonies will much exceed the due measure of holy Fear and Trembling; but this is from want of Faith in Christ, and not understanding the Christian Graces, which put no Man into a State of Despair, be his Sins or God's Judgments never so great, because godly Sorrow followed by Repentance and Faith in Christ, is sufficient to take away all the Malignity of them. So that if he will judge right of his Condition, he will place no more to his own Account, than godly Sorrow mixed with a Fear and Trembling for future, not for past Offences, of which he hath already repented, and then if he hath but Faith enough to trust in Christ for the Issue, and place Forgiveness upon the Foot of his Merits, he must be in a safe way to Salvation.

*P.* But are not weak Minds apt to be much affected with God's Judgments in this World, as if their Case were inconsolable somtimes?

*D.*

**D.** That is because their Minds are weak for want of Gospel Knowledge. If they were strong in the Lord, so as to know it to be the divine Will that this World should be no Place of Rest, no continuing City for us to dwell in, that we must not expect to be free from Troubles of one kind or other, and that our State is no other than as God made it; that he only knows what is best for us, and that godly Sorrow will soon reconcile all these things to our strength, I had almost said, to our Choice; we shall see nothing of an inconsolable Nature in the worst that happens to us in this World: So far from it that the Apostle tells us, *if we are without Chastisement then are we Bastards and not Sons; for what Son is he whom the Father chasteneth not.* All that we have to do in this case is, *not to despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when we are rebuked of him.*

Heb. 12.  
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Ver. 5.

For this is but the State of the World with every good Man in a great measure, a State of Trials and Self-denial, where we must encounter with many Sorrows, before we can be happy in Mind and Conscience: But our Hopes and Expectations prevailing over all outward Accidents of Life, and inward Disorders of Mind, and get-



getting in the end the Mastery, all former Sorrows in a State of Mourning are but the Harbingers of Joy, we knowing that a Change must follow soon from this State of Misery, which is not destitute of its Consolation even in this Life, to a State of Glory and Happiness hereafter.

And thus it appears that as there is a State of Jollity and Pleasure, which bringeth forth Sorrow and Repentance, so there is a State of Sorrow and Repentance, which bringeth forth Joy.

Shew me now the wise and Christian Part in the Preference of these two, and that godly Sorrow is more worthy of our Choice and Esteem, as well from the Reason of the Thing, as because of our Savior's Promise of Comfort to those that so mourn.

P. Every wise man will chuse to prefer that State which will secure him the best End, and every good Christian to prefer eternal before temporal Enjoyments. This is according to plain Reason and Discretion, and whoever will take up with such a Guide, and not trust himself to be led by his Passions, must certainly be in no doubt to prefer this State of godly Sorrow which bringeth forth Joy, to any other State of worldly Pleasures, which must end at last in Repentance

tance and Misery. This is plain from the reason of the Thing, but then the Promise of Comfort is a farther strengthening to those that mourn in a Christian Manner. For the worst we can suppose in a State of godly Sorrow is, that some thro' Weakness may be inclin'd to despond of their Condition, lest they should not be able to struggle with it to the end; but now having our Savior's Promise, that *they shall be comforted*, that is, either strengthened by his Spirit to overcome, or at least to bear with Patience their present Miseries, if we put any Confidence in God that he will be to us as good as his Word, we can never be in any Danger of either running into Despair or of being tempted above what we are able to endure; and therefore the Psalmist could say, *In the multitude of my Thoughts within me, that is, of the Sorrows I had in my heart, thy Comforts delight my Soul*; and the Apostle St. Paul says, *we glory in Tribulation, knowing that Tribulation worketh Patience, and Patience Experience, and Experience Hope*. If God will therefore thus wipe away Tears from our Eyes who are under Christian Chastisement, we can have no doubt with our selves, but must choose and prefer a State of godly Sorrow and Mourn-

Psal. 94.  
19.

Rom. 5.  
3. 4.

Mourning, before a State of Temporal and worldly Pleasures at any time.

*D.* You see then that how hard-soever it be to Flesh and Blood, to conceive any Chastisement to be otherwise than grievous, yet we ought to consider that Man is not sent into this World, like the Leviathan into the Sea, to take his Sport and Pastime therein; but to exercise and prepare himself here for a better Life and Portion hereafter. That many of those things which we are apt to call, and esteem to be Pleasures, are in reality poor things, and not worth our Notice; or else have so much Mixture of Evil accompanying them, that the Pain outweighs the Pleasure often, and never fails to embitter it with something to provoke our Passions, and discompose our Temper of Mind and Body, thro' a Dread of future Pain and Remorse, if not in some measure already mixed with our Enjoyments. What a thing therefore is Pleasure, when the most extreme hath generally something of Faintness and Dying in it! But, allowing it were some more compleat Joy and Satisfaction which we seek after, and that the Possession would really make us happy for the time, yet we can easily count up all the Degrees of Satisfaction, which the utmost of worldly Enjoyments doth afford. And thus



thus when temporal and spiritual Pleasures stand together to be compared with one another, 'tis surely but a poor Portion of Blessings, which can be so easily mark'd out, and describ'd in all their Qualities; nothing like the Blessings on the other hand, those spiritual Enjoyments, which the Gospel makes every good Christian to hope for and expect, without measure and without end. The very Duration of Pleasure abstracted from all degrees of Pain, were the Pleasure to be suppos'd really less in it self, might make a smaller Degree of one kind, which is to last for Ages, vastly more eligible, and to be prefer'd to a greater degree of another, which could endure but for a short Season: How much more therefore when the Blessings of a future exceed, not only in Duration but also in degree, those mistaken Pleasures in this present Life; which are scarcely to be called Blessings, nay, are often so very contrary, that in a few Years they become no other than Rods and Scourges to whip our selves, and appear to us as Curses and Plagues in our way, sent as Judgments from God to torment and punish us.

From the very Reason of the thing therefore, every wise Man can never think of fixing on other, than Christian Principles

Principles for Happiness; such as bring him in view of that State of Enjoyments, which is without mixture of Pain or Trouble, either dreaded or felt; and where Soul and Body partake of mutual Comforts, without the old Conflicts between the Flesh and the Spirit. Where all Troubles cease and are no more remembered, all Tears are wiped from our Eyes, and all Grief from our Hearts, and all our Days of Mourning are succeeded by endless Ages of Joy immeasurable, and at present inconceivable.

But besides the Prospect of future Blessings, for the Portion of a wretched Life spent here in mourning and godly Sorrow, that we may not be altogether without present Complacency of Mind, we have our Savior's Promise that we shall be comforted, *i. e.* having prepar'd our selves by Acts of Self-denial and Mortification here, and made our Souls capable of, and intent on spiritual Food to nourish us, we may depend upon having the Assistance of the holy Spirit of God to improve our Faith, and to strengthen our Hopes and Endeavors, so that even the present State of our Condition shall not want Comfort. Whereas all those who have their Portion of good things in this Life, who have most of the carnal Jollities of this World attending

*The Blessings of*

attending them; have a large Account to make with God, and having lost their time in this World, have no way left to clear off the Arrear of Duty and Service which they owe their Lord, and for which they must answer by a woeful Mourning in another. We often begin with Pleasure and end with Pain; but on the contrary in the Duties of Religion, when we begin with Labor and Sorrow, we end in Contentment. For true Contentment hath more of the Grave and Sedate, than of the Sprightly and Volatile in its Nature. It is observ'd in the convulsive Motions of the Face in crying and laughing, that there is some Resemblance, and both produce Tears, so that Joy and Sorrow are nearer a-kin than some imagine.

This State of Mourning and godly Sorrow therefore is a blessed Estate, and very aptly succeeds that former Beatitude of Poverty of Spirit, which is the Christian Foundation of Gospel Holiness. The one makes us see and the other feel our own weak and sinful Condition; which is a prevailing Reason why we should choose this State of Mourning, as proper Physick for a distemper'd Soul; tho' it be bitter, yet in this there is Comfort, that the great Physician of Souls hath prescrib'd and given



given it a Blessing. So that our Part must be to submit and be obedient as good Patients ought; to comply with those means prescribed, to recover and forward our spiritual Health and Happiness.

But I think I made mention of a particular time, when we might chiefly expect the good Effects of this Consolation in an extraordinary Manner.

*P.* You did so, and that is at the Hour of Death, when we have most need of Comfort; for then Death will not appear so terrible to a mourning Sinner, as to a Man in a State of worldly Pleasures and Enjoyments.

*D.* Then will this Comfort shew it self to Perfection, when the Spirit of a Man shall grow stronger, as the Body faints and grows weaker. The World at this time will appear to us vastly chang'd from what it was before. No Allurements to Sin; no craving and impetuous Motions to Vice. Then we shall see the naked Fallacies of all its Pleasures with a clearer Eye; and if we desire to continue in it longer, it will not be for the love of any good we shall perceive in it worth our stay, but out of Fear and Dread of divine Punishments. At such a time the voluptuous Sinner puts on true mourning, and yet thinks it the happiest Portion of

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Life

*The Blessings of*

Life he ever enjoyed: and to prolong it but for a short Season, till he could make his Peace with God, Oh! how happy would that be! how would he rejoice to exchange the Pleasures and Vanities of his Life just finishing (if it were possible) for a very few Days, to be wholly devoted to nothing else but Sorrow and Mourning, and console himself all that while in his dying State.

On the contrary, the humble and contrite Heart, which has been all his Life long daily dying, instead of a broken Spirit at that critical Season, feels within him fresh Marks of Comfort: sees the end of all his Miseries approaching, and has nothing to call his Thoughts off from Eternity. His past Life reconciles the present Weakness of Body to his Expectations of suffering in the Flesh: this does not at all alarm him: long foreseen he welcomes Death, and is so far from wishing to exchange his dying Condition, that he goes out of this World perhaps with more true Peace and Contentment of Mind, than any one who stays behind him. A Change he is to make, but it is from a state of Mourning to a State of Glory, and whoever is brought by Afflictions and godly Sorrow, to look upon the End of Life in this light, will not see much to  
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long for here, but a great deal to encrease his Hopes and Expectations of Blessings hereafter.

But what do you now infer from this Doctrine?

*P.* I infer with the Preacher in the Book *Ecclesiastes*, that to every thing there is a Season, and a time to every purpose under Heaven, a time to mourn, and a time to rejoyce, and the like, and that this change of times is necessary for the well-being of Man, and the World is the better for it. It shews the Wildom and Excellence of the Works of God, and that in all human Pains and Travel after Pleasures and Profit in this World, there is nothing but Vanity and Vexation of Spirit. For the Christian virtues never shine but when there is occasion to exercise them, and were there not these Vicissitudes of time in days of Adversity and Prosperity, the Virtues of Patience and Submission, of Temperance, Sobriety and Self-denial would often sleep in us, and a Man would have few Opportunities of shewing all that Piety and Godliness which is in him. To be therefore in a State of Sorrow and Mourning in its proper time, is as decent and necessary for our well-being, as to plant or build, laugh or rejoyce in their Seasons. So wisely

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hath God contriv'd all things to answer for Good and not for Hurt, that every Man may make a beneficial Use of all Conditions of Life, and that Good and Evil in the World should answer some purpose or other in its various Seasons, to promote the common Happiness of the Universe.

*D.* You see then that it is a great mistake, to think that a mixture of Good and Evil in this World is any Obstacle to Man's Happiness, but the contrary. For without some Feeling of Misery and Disappointment we could never have any true or high Notions of Happiness. For if Men had every thing at their Wish and Desire, and were to live always in a course of prosperous success, they would lose the one half of their own natural Powers at least, and be in a state of less Perfection than at present. For we are now free Agents, which we could not be then, doing all things by a kind of Instinct, since we could not but follow by Necessity our Appetites, which in such a State suppos'd can never fail us. What then would become of Man's Reason? Since he could have nothing to employ it about, the Office of the rational Powers and Faculties, must cease and be extinct; for its whole Business is taken up with separating and distin-

distinguishing between good and evil ; and if we were to meet with no Disappointments in Life, we should then know no such thing as Evil, and consequently should have no use either of our Free-will or of our Reason, because Appetite and natural Instinct would do the Business as well without them : and then, wherein should we differ from brute Creatures, who have no Understanding ? Thus it appears how the tast and feeling of Evil make Men reflect and exercise their natural Powers, weigh the present Prospect and consequence of things, ballance good and evil together, to make them choose and refuse as they see reason for it. It is therefore of use to the rational World, that there should be a mixture of Good and Evil, to exercise the Passions and rational Faculties, in order to compleat and perfect our Happiness. For the more we know of the difference between Good and Evil, the greater Inclination we have to rectify our Manners, and act according to the ultimate end of all, which is our Happiness. Till we know and feel in some sense what it is to be miserable, we know not what it is to be happy. We must make Reflections upon the one and on the other State, before we form our Judgment, and the more sensible we are of the one, the high-

er our Notions are of the other. For the Proportion of Joy and Sorrow answers and follows in proportion to such Reflections; and we always exercise our Reason more or less, according as our Passions are differently affected. It is not therefore in our Nature to have high and true Notions of Good and Happiness, till we feel somewhat and are much affected with Misery and Evil. For tho' all Good centers in God alone, and he is to be the ultimate End of all, and so by Intuition unto him we are led as by the Sun, to guide our steps in the Paths of Duty and Service, yet there are so many Thorns and Briars in our way, so many Evils to be avoided, that we are oblig'd to look upon these with a good degree of Passion and Aversion first, which is not to be done till we feel something of Misery, before we can take any true Joy in the course we are in. Thus a Mixture of Good and Evil in the World adds to our Felicity, and naturally tends to encrease our Happiness; for Sorrow is a Passion as natural as Joy, and they both stand before us opposite to one another, to contribute to and fulfil all the true ends of Life; and it must be from a carnal Principle, and some mistaken Notions of sensible Pleasures, that any Man can suppose a Mixture of Good  
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and Evil in the World to be any Obstacle to his Happiness.

What other Inference do you make from this Doctrine?

*P.* That the Comfort which is promis'd by Christ to those that mourn, is of the Nature of a real Blessing. It is not only the Effect of a rational Compliance, which a wise Man would condescend to in such a State, wherein he cannot help himself, which is generally called Patience by Force, but it is a Consolation proceeding from a voluntary Action, out of a Sense of Duty to God, and partakes in some measure of positive Joy. For tho' in all mourning there is a mixture of Fear and Love, and in all Fear there is Torment; yet in this mourning for Sin which our Savior recommends, there is something supernatural added, as the Gift of Christ for our Submission, which making our Love perfect casteth out Fear, and the Consolation which follows is not the natural Effect of our Sorrow, but proceeds from the extraordinary Influence of the Divine Spirit. So that this Comfort is an Act of Bounty, the Gift of Christ bestowed to answer our present Circumstance of Mourning; and this we could never have had any Title

to, had not Christ first promis'd it to us as his Blessing.

*D.* Thus you see it matters not in what Circumstance of Life we are placed in this World, since there is more Joy in divine Consolation, than there is Weight in present Sufferings. There is a natural Fortitude of Mind which a Man may make himself Master of, to make the Passion of Grief and Sorrow tolerable, without any other than rational Help; and altho' he cannot but know and feel his own Misery, yet he has it in his Power to reconcile it to all those ends of Life, which his Circumstances require. Every one carries this Antidote about him for these Maladies, for all Sorrow doth but bend, it doth not break the Mind of a resolute and steady Man of Virtue. But if he be a Man of Religion also, and depends upon divine Consolations, all temporal Sufferings will prove productive of real Joy. For God will unite his Spirit to the Soul of Man, which is also spiritual, whenever godly Sorrow calls for divine Assistance. So that the whole Man will in a Manner become all Soul and all Spirit, and the Body will not feel Pain when the Soul is in Transport, for such a Union is a sure Anchor of Joy for a divine Soul to rest upon. The Circumstance of being toss'd  
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about even by outward storms of Calamity, during the time we have put our selves in this mourning State, doth no more than make a Christian Pilot to steer his Course steddily, and with greater Care till he gets into Harbor. If then we are sure of Comfort in this State, 'tis nothing how much our Sufferings be, since the Consolation will be proportionable. 'Tis enough that our Sorrow shall be turned into Joy, and our Joy no Man can take from us, For tho' the Evil of Pain may distress the Body, it cannot reach the Soul in this World, and if the Soul be safe and happy, we need not care much what becomes of the other Part.

This is a good Lesson for every poor and suffering Christian to learn, that he may not much bemoan himself, or envy the Circumstances of others; for if our Desires and Appetites be but satisfy'd, it is no matter whether it be with more or less Food. We measure not spiritual Consolation by the Quantity of temporal Blessings, but by its divine Qualities, and if it equally affects all good Christians in all Circumstances, with Comforts alike answerable to their Wants and Necessities, it matters not how much or how little Blessings we enjoy here: And therefore it is a great Mistake, to think that the rich



rich and great Men of this World enjoy more Happiness in it than the poor, because divine Consolation is sufficient and equal to all Conditions; and if the generality of Mankind are apt to look upon this in another light, it is either because they turn the wrong end of the Perspective to them; make things at distance seem otherwise than they are, or else because they form their Judgment of other Men, not by their inward Thoughts, but outward Affluence. Let every Man but speak for himself, and that is the only way to know the true Sense that each hath of his own Condition, and then you will find that there is not so much difference in this World, as to Happiness, as is generally imagin'd; and that the poor stand upon as good a Footing in it, by the Moderation of their Desires and Expectations, sufficient to satisfy them, as any of the highest Fortunes and Honors, who have generally Minds as extensive as their Estates, and perhaps more so; impatiently lusting and craving after farther and more distant Gratifications, without which they often suppose they can never be happy.

*P.* This is indeed true Philosophy, which sheweth us the Secrets of Wisdom, for this always begins with the Fear of the Lord. Well might the Apostle say, *Where*  
 1 Cor. 1. 20. *is*

*is the Wise? where is the Scribe? where is the Disputer of this World? hath not God made foolish the Wisdom of this World? And King David. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the Soul; the Testimony of the Lord is sure, making Wise the Simple.*



## C H A P. III.

**D.** **T**HE *Third* Beatitude mention'd by our Savior is in these Words,

*Blessed are the Meek, for they shall inherit the Earth.*

The former immediately preceding hath the Promise of Comfort, and here this of Meekness hath the Promise of good things in the Earth. So then it seemeth there is nothing so unpromising in the way of this World, but, if it be attended with God's Blessing, will have a good and prosperous Issue. For what is more unlikely in the common way of speaking and thinking amongst worldly minded Men, to produce Joy and Comfort, than a State of mourning; or to make good Provision in this World, than a Disposition of Mind to submit to, and not contend much, with, the Injuries and Oppression of Men: and yet by the Blessing of God on an humble and meek Spirit, and on a broken and contrite Heart, both the one and the other enjoy Life full as happily as their Condition requireth.

Humility



Humility and Meekness having therefore this Promise of a comfortable Portion to subsist upon in the Earth, it must be very well worth our seeking after. Shew me then the several Properties of this Grace and Virtue and its Aptness to procure the Enjoyment of this Inheritance.

*P.* There are three chief Properties of Meekness.

*First*, An humble Opinion of our selves with a high Reverence of our Superiors.

*Second*, A Quietness of Spirit and just Abhorrence of Strife and Contention.

*Third*, A Readiness and Willingness to suffer rather than to revenge Injuries.

In all these several respects the meek Man is in the direct way to inherit the Earth, *i. e.* to enjoy his Portion whatever it be in the World, more happily and with less Restraint than others.

*D.* Let me have your Notions then of the first Property, which implies a mean Opinion of our selves and high Reverence of our Superiors; and shew me how this humble Spirit promotes our temporal Interest in this World.

*P.* The first part of Meekness no doubt is to think lowly of our selves, and the Consequence of that is to think well of others. Nothing recommends us more effectually

effectually to the Care and Consideration of our Superiors than this humble Carriage, for it shews that we esteem and honor their Dignity and Station. Men of Place and Power love to be prais'd and courted, and he that is apt to think well of all, will not fail to give due Honor and Reverence to his Betters, especially to all those who are in high Post and Authority. These are generally the Idols of the common People; by reason of their low Station in Life and mean opinion of themselves, they are always dispos'd to reverence the superior Members of the Government, to treat them commonly as Patrons and Fathers, seek and apply to them for Favor and Protection in their civil Rights and Properties, and they in return are apt to look upon them as their Children and Dependants, and to befriend all those who respect them and pay due Deference to their Character. If therefore to have Friends amongst the Men of Power and Authority in the World, be the way to inherit the Earth, no doubt under this first Property of Meekness we may find the ready and true Method to beget such an Interest.

*D.* The Decency and Order to be kept up in social Life, require a Distinction of Place, between the Governors and

and the Governed, and if the one were not dispos'd to honor the other, they would certainly never obey them. For Power and Authority tho' it be lodged principally and chiefly in the hands of one or a few, yet the regular Execution thereof must go thro' the Hands of the whole Community, in subordinate Offices depending on one another; as therefore there must be a common Harmony in the Members, so a Readiness also to give every one severally due Honor, according to Place and Station. So that Superiority and Obedience are relative things, and depend on mutual Association, and good Correspondence with one another; and to be meek and lowly minded is to enforce this Dependence in the best manner. For it promotes Love and Obedience, and that in the end begets Friendship, Peace and good Government. And when Governors take notice of such dutiful and respectful Carriage in their Subjects and Servants, they are sure to treat them always with Lenity and Kindness, and to protect and defend them in their just Rights and Liberties. To be meek therefore is to be not only good, but also wise in our Generation, like Children of this World to make our selves Favorites of great Men; but with this Difference, the  
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meek Man does it from a low and mean Opinion of himself, and out of Reverence to the Government, but the Courtier for mercenary Ends. There is a wide Distance however between Respect and Flattery, tho' not easily seen at first sight, and last of all, by the Man at whom it is levelled; yet generally when discern'd, Flattery procures Hatred rather than good Will, and the Courtier is often mistaken and disappointed by his servile Obsequiousness. For this Craft is but a false Representation of our Esteem, in order to set our selves off; it is far from offering any true Respect; and he that thinks he is drawing a fair Picture all the while and recommending himself, will find that Art is vastly short of Nature in such Paintings. The meek who have no Affectation generally recommend themselves best to the Judgment of Mankind. If they have any superior Parts, they will be soon seen and taken Notice of, and the naked Simplicity of their Manners is often the best Address: for altho' the greater part of the World be much taken with Ceremony, and hearing their own Praises, yet the wiser part, who are commonly those in highest Stations, have a better Insight into Men, and are able to distinguish Reverence and Humility from a subtle and feign'd Pretence; to reward  
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the one, and slight the other. Thus a low and mean Opinion of our selves, as it begets in us true Reverence for others, so it strikes our Superiors with a high Notion and worthy Esteem of our Virtue; recommends us to them as fit and equal to administer Justice, as proper Instruments to execute any thing for the publick Good, both as the best Servants and Officers to preserve and maintain the Government.

*P.* Meekness is no doubt a good Argument to shew our Sense of Submission, and Obedience to Governors, but how doth it set Men forward for Preferment in the World and Offices in the State? It should rather seem that something extraordinary of Life and Spirit is required in Magistracy, and Men of such humble Minds are little given to take Authority upon them.

*D.* Your Objection, altho' of no great Weight; yet, I believe, is according to the vulgar Accepration in matter of Government in the World. Men are apt to think Authority is ingrafted in some by Nature, and that he is unfit for Rule and Dominion, who is not higher by the Shoulders, or crested like a Cock; whereas Authority is an accidental Thing, not the Gift of Nature, but of Man under the Direction and Providence of God, and is

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therefore as strong and mighty in the Hands of little *David* as of *Goliath*. We are not to separate the Power from, nor measure it by the Qualities of the Person in Office, if he be thereunto legally called, and acts not in Destruction of the State; a meek Man is surely as well qualified to exercise Power as any other, for it is a common saying, No one better knows how to rule, than he who knows well how to obey. Neither doth the Grace of Meekness depress the Spirit of Government, when Power is legally placed in the Hands of the Meek, but rather provokes and encourages Obedience the more, from a Principle of Love as well as Fear: and that State must surely be happy and in a flourishing Condition, where the Governors are equally revered and beloved.

What is the next Property of Meekness, which disposeth us to get and preserve a comfortable Portion of the good things in the Earth, to inherit it as a Blessing?

*P.* Another chief Property of Meekness implies a Quietness of Spirit, and just Abhorrence of Strife and Contention. When a Man is content to give up smaller Matters rather than incur the Wrath of another, he surely makes one Friend by this means, and tho' it be neither safe  
nor



nor wise in all points to be of such con-  
 descending Temper, when a Man's For-  
 tune and good Name is deeply concerned,  
 yet if both these may be in the main se-  
 cur'd, let him give up what he will, he  
 is always a Gainer by it. This is a mat-  
 ter of no great difficulty to a meek Man,  
 and contributes much to our Happinels in  
 Life, and yet this is by no means the  
 common Practice. For there is a Self-  
 conceit in Men, as well as a Self-interest,  
 and they are too apt to go together. Now  
 in a State of Contention and Strife no one  
 is sure of his own Property; there is al-  
 ways such Uproar and Confusion occasi-  
 oned by it, that Disputes cannot but arise  
 out of Disputes, and multiply one ano-  
 ther; and this must create a common and  
 general Loss to both Parties. That Man  
 has but a bad Inheritance where his Title  
 is frequently under Debate, *but to work* <sup>2 Th. 3. 8.</sup>  
*with Quietness and eat our own Bread,*  
 as St. Paul says, is to make *one Hand-* <sup>Pro. 17. 1.</sup>  
*ful better than two, and a dry Morsel*  
*better than Sacrifice,* as the Wise Man's  
 Expression is. So that this Spirit disposes  
 us best to enjoy what we have, saves us  
 the Expence as well as Trouble of being  
 concerned in Broils, where nothing is to  
 be got but Sorrow and Vexation, and  
 keeps us generally in the Possession of all

our Inheritance, and God's Blessing with it.

*D.* It appears evidently by this that nothing makes us enjoy our Portion more securely, or with greater Content, than this peaceable Spirit; and that Men of the contrary Disposition make themselves Enemies by a froward and contentious Temper. For they often imagine that they have a Right and Property in things that no way belong to them, and take all severe Methods of obtaining their Ends, let the Consequence be what it will; and tho' they create never so much Trouble, Confusion and Ill-will in the World, yet they will not yield to the least Abatement of a doubtful Right, or to any In-croachment on their Liberties, altho' it were never so much for the publick Good. But Meekness looks upon all this with Abhorrence; thinks smaller Matters not worth striving for; shews much of a condescending Temper; complies with the Weakness and Obstinacy of imperuous Minds, sometimes tho' it be to Loss, rather than contend in a vexatious Cause. The meek Man is so far from being rais'd at the Frowardness and Ill-will of others, that he is no way agitated by Resentment or Passion, and scorns to be other than such as the Servants of the Lord ought to be;

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gentle to all Men, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose, but if that faileth, submitting; knowing that *the Begining of Strife is as when one letteth out Water*, as Solomon saith, that is, as a Torrent broke loose, there is hardly any stopping of it. Thus he never fails to get into the Love and good liking of all his Neighbors, who are sure of a Friend in him, and therefore are always dispos'd to do him friendly Offices; and if the forward will strive, it must be surely a Happiness to have both the Hands and Hearts of the Community of our side, to defend and help in case of need. For Oppression when it falls upon a meek Man, is like a Hurricane in Summer, soon over; it is easily seen and discover'd by one black Cloud, and therefore is visible to every Body, and it becomes every one's caule to provide against it; no one knows where it will end. But be that as it will, he is sure by this means to exercise that Virtue, which is the Ornament of the Christian Profession, and of great price in the Sight of God; that he hath the Exhortation and Example of Christ himself for so doing; hath excellent Promises to enliven him: namely, that God *will guide him in Judgment, will teach him his Ways,* and

Prov. 17.

14.

Pf. 25. 9.



*will hide him in the Day of Wrath. And*  
 Pr. 15. 1. *if a soft Answer, as the wise man saith,*  
 25. 15. *turneth away Wrath, and a soft Tongue*  
*breaketh the Bones,* we have good Reason to hope for these comfortable Effects by our Meekness, upon the most froward and contentious Spirit. But this Inheritance he can never take from him who hateth Contention, be he never so froward; I mean, a quiet and composed Mind and Temper, which the meek Man enjoys above all others in the World, and that will make his morsel of Bread go down, with Sweetness and Contentment in every State of Life; and without this our Inheritance in the Earth becomes rather a Curse than a Blessing. For what else can you call large Estates and Possessions, without a Spirit to use and enjoy them with Comfort and Satisfaction, but real Plagues, cursed Charms to enslave and to bewitch us. But give me Meekness, and I shall have Peace and enjoy my Portion in the Earth, with all its Thorns and Briars, as in a Garden. Whoever rudely spoils it by Oppression, takes to himself the Thorn, but leaves me the sweet Rose of Content, and I am nothing the poorer for it. This is the only way to inherit the Earth with Peace of Mind, to look upon every thing in it as subject to  
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Rapine and Violence, and perishable by Nature. To have an Abhorrence of Strife and Contention is but to suffer, or rather content our selves, with a sort of Indifference, at the Obstinacy and Perverseness of others; and if not able to restrain them by a Spirit of Meekness, to yield with Patience, knowing that it is no matter of marvel, as the wise Man saith, *if thou Eccl. 5. 3. seeest the Oppression of the Poor and the Violent perverting of Judgment and Justice.*

What is farther implied in this Spirit of Meekness to qualify us the better to inherit our Portion in the Earth?

P. The *Third* Property of Meekness implies a Readiness and Willingness to suffer rather than revenge Injuries. To give and take Offences, we must suppose, has been and ever will be a common Practice amongst Men as long as the World lasts, altho' all the Precepts of Christianity are against it. Because there is the Passion of Anger in some Degree or other in all Men, and very strong in most. And tho' this be opposite to a true Christian Spirit, yet there is something of Nature in it also, too strong for us to govern in its first Approaches. This Part of Meekness therefore, which is a refinement of our Nature, is to be obtained by Practice, and a Man

that is watchful over himself, will so learn how to govern his Passion, when it rises, tho' he cannot restrain it altogether, that he will not suffer much by it; which is a great Point gained towards taking away Offence. There is no reason therefore to take offence at that in another, which we cannot absolutely restrain in our selves, and since it is natural for us all to be more or less affected with this Passion, 'tis odds but at one time or other we need all of us mutual Forgiveness. But the meek Man has a farther Principle to guide him in this forgiving Temper, even to a favorable Construction of Injuries proceeding of Malice, for he is more extensive in his Charity than only to love those that love him; he has learned after the Christian Precept to act with Love even towards his Enemies. Revenge is intolerable in a Christian, and not to be justified in any moral Man, altho' it is said that some Philosophers have thought otherwise; all the Laws of God and Man are against it; it hurts our Honor, for it argues a weak Mind and an unruly Temper, and blasts our good-name; we hurt no Body by it so much as our selves, for it preys upon the Conscience often to Distraction. So that there are more Evils in this Vice than can be well set down, and yet all  
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of them are remedied by a forgiving Spirit. This Property therefore engages us in the Study of doing good to all Men, and that will in a great measure return with a double Blessing upon our selves. For, according to the worst Construction, all Men are said to love their Neighbor tho' they hate their Enemy, and he that is disposed to be a good Neighbor, and to be universal in his Beneficence and Charity, cannot but meet with Esteem wherever he goes. And thus the meek Man, as he gives none, so he is apt to meet with no Offence, inherits his Portion in the World, and has a Title to the Favor and Good-will of all he converses with.

D. 'Tis certain, be a man's Title never so good, yet he must not expect to meet with due Returns of Gratitude and good Offices from all about him; for there will be some; as the Psalmist says, *who are not for Peace, and will devise deceitful matters against them who are quiet in the Land*; and when this is the Will of God, 'tis our Duty not to think our selves too good to suffer. Our Savior himself has pronounced a Woe to the World because of Offences, *for, saith he, it must needs be that Offences come*. A meek Man therefore whenever he receives an Injury, looks upon it first as the Work of

Pf. 35.20.

Mat. 18.7.

of God, who has surely always cause enough to chastise him: and then secondly, as the hasty Action of an angry Brother. In this last view he sees nothing to provoke his Resentment above the ordinary Rules of Discretion, he makes just allowances for Passion, and natural Frailty, knowing he is not to have Commerce here with Angels, but Men. But if he considers it in the Gospel Light, by our Savior's Precept and his own Example, he will see cause of Pity more than of Resentment, and be ready and willing to forgive the Offence.

*P.* But doth not Offences and Affronts stir up the Passion of Anger, and how must we prevent its first Motions?

*D.* I grant there is no sufficient Power in us to prevent the Passion from rising upon certain Occasions; for the Blood will boil and the Resentment flow, upon the first notice of the Injury offered. For the first Motions of Passion are involuntary, and not at all within our Power. But then we are to consider, that the very thing most opposite to that Christian Virtue of Meekness is Excess of Passion; and therefore always when this Virtue is near at heart, a Man will have his Eye fixt and intent upon every Motion of Passion, be alarm'd at its first Approaches,  
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and dread it as his Bane and Poison. If then after all this he be so weak as to yield to his Resentments, he renounces all Pretensions to this heavenly Temper, distrusts himself and his Portion in Life, and yet acts as if he were the supreme Governor and Director of the Universe. Whereas a truly meek Man who passes over an Affront, loses nothing by it, the shame falls upon the injurious Person, and if there be Damage in it, the Laws of the Land seldom fail to make ample Retribution.

*P.* But doth it not shew much of a mean and dastardly Spirit, not to resent an Affront?

*D.* Quite the contrary. For true Courage and Magnanimity never shews it self in a better light, than on this Occasion. The *Roman* Orator tells us, that Fortitude is as well seen in Bearing and Suffering with a steady Mind under Labor and evil Accidents, as in undertaking perilous Actions; so that the true Subject to exercise our Courage upon, are the Evils of Life, such as injurious Treatment, bad Neighbors, and other Dangers of adverse Fortune; by all which a stout and steady Mind ought never to be affected; so as to do any rash thing. There were not wanting some of the moral Heathens,



Aristotle.

Pittacus  
ap. Stob.Rom. 12.  
19.

Heathens, who came up to this Perfection of Mind, at least recommended it in their Writings, as such. One saith, as it is a weak Stomach which cannot digest hard Meat, so it is a weak Mind, which cannot bear Injuries. Of another it is said, Pardon is better than Revenge, for that is a sign of a meek and manly Nature, but the other is brutish. So that to get the better of our angry Passions on this occasion, is no unworthy Action, nor any Mark or Token of a mean Spirit; neither is it so hard a matter to do, as some imagine, since every moral good Man, by the bare Dictates of Reason, has it so much in his Power. But when Religion is in the Case, a Man must neither have a good Faith, nor a good Understanding, who finds it hard to be easy and indifferent to Reproach, and impossible to forgive Injuries. There are but two things can make the Retaliation of Injuries, in any sort useful or beneficial, the one to punish Wickedness for the sake of Example. the other to secure our selves. But who art thou, O Man, in private Life, who pretendest to punish? *Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.* His Authority must always go along with, and give it Sanction. And what is our Security the better by Revenge?

venge? How are you sure not to make two Enemies for one by it? 'Tis at best but to put your self on equal Terms with your Adversary, and to keep the Wound green, that would otherwise heal of course, as a great Man says. The only good Security against Injuries, is a good and quiet Disposition of Mind and suitable Demeanor; to be upright in Heart, free from Guile, benign, affable and full of good Will; and then a Man's Actions will be always obliging and provoke no Body. Many of the greatest Men have thought it their Interest, to choose this way of securing Authority and Respect to themselves. *Cyrus* in all his Grandeur, is remark'd by *Zenophon*, to be of this sweet Temper. *Plutarch* writes of *Antigonus*, that his Policy was to use Lenity and Mildness, to keep well with his Army. *Philip* of *Macedon* and *Alexander* his Son, were great Kings of absolute Power and Authority, and yet greatly remarkable for forgiving Injuries. In this same Virtue also the worthiest Men amongst the *Romans*, as *Augustus*, *Vespasian*, and *Titus* his Son, with many others, did remarkably excel. All this arose in those Heroes, only from a moral Principle; now we Christians have far greater Security in the Favor and Protection of  
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God for like Behavior. We know also what Solomon says, *When a Man's ways please the Lord, he maketh even his Enemies to be at peace with him.* For he turneth the Hearts of Men sometimes in our Favor, as of *Eſau* towards *Jacob*, upon our humble and meek Behavior.

Prov. 16.  
7.

But ſurely upon a civil Account, it is beſt and ſafeſt to keep to a Spirit of Meekneſs, and put on a forgiving Temper, to ſecure us from the wrath of Man, or at leaſt to ſecure us from taking Revenge our ſelves. We have the Laws of the Land to befriend us in extraordinary Caſes, and even where the Laws do not reach to relieve us and puniſh an Injury, yet they give us wiſe Counſel, how to behave, and never fail to have long Hands, to catch all thoſe who pretend to revenge themſelves of their Adverſary. When Men are ſo unhappy to fall under the Wrath and Oppreſſion of others, there ſeldom comes any good end of that matter, unleſs it be brought about by a meek and a forgiving Spirit.

P. You have mentioned many great Men, and ſome Philoſophers, ſupporting both by their Example and by their Writings, the Excellence of a meek and forgiving Spirit, and that not only Hea-  
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thens but others, Ancients and Moderns, have commended it as a most worthy Principle; and that it is perfectly agreeable to Religion we all know; but were there not some other great Men of old, who avowed and maintained Principles, tending more to Wrath and Cruelty, and far from this Doctrine of the Excellence of Meekness?

*D.* Your Observation is very just and true. For all Men must allow that the Study of Philosophy in ancient times, produced various Opinions and Sects, and great Mistakes and Contradictions in matters of Religion, and righteous or virtuous Conduct in the World. And the Reason thereof is plain, because they had no helps from Revelation. But we Christians have great Advantage of those that went before us in the Clearness of that light, in which this Christian Grace of Meekness, and all other moral Virtues stand before us by the Gospel. We see now that a forgiving Temper is not only convenient and praise-worthy, but also an indispensable Christian Duty. The ancient Philosophers argued the Worth of it, from a certain natural Greatness of Mind, in being above revenging an Injury; but the Christian Philosopher does it, from Gospel Institution, and that extensive Principle

ple of universal Charity. The one places it in the Excellence of the human Mind, the other in the Imitation of the divine Perfections. All speculative Knowledge in divine Matters, which is not well supported by Revelation, gives us leave to doubt of the Truth and Reality of its Principles and Conclusions; and no Man is satisfied therein, any farther than he conceives by his own Reason and Understanding. Human Authority will have some weight, but it is no way conclusive; but divine Authority puts an end to all Dispute. 'Tis easy for us now to see the necessary Consequence of moral Righteousness, to serve the Ends of Religion, and to answer the Will of God, and therefore that it was evermore matter of religious Duty. But who knows how the Ancients look'd upon it? Whether only as a sublime Elevation of the human Mind worthy of a Philosopher; or whether as a Part of natural Religion. 'Tis plain if they understood it in this last Sense, they wrote but very darkly and doubtfully about it, for they mixed so much vain Idolatry with all their religious Worship, that a Man at this Day, cannot well judge with any Truth or Certainty of it. *Cicero* and *Seneca* and other Moralists, nay even the divine *Plato* himself, had such incoherent

herent Conceptions of God; that an ordinary Christian of this Age shall demonstrate more of the Truth of natural Religion by the light of the Gospel, than they were able to do with all their Philosophy. And therefore, tho' Morality appears to be now and always was an essential Part of true Religion, and plainly demonstrable by the Powers of Reason; and the Philosophers of old seem to have been blest with as large natural Capacities; and to have made as much use of their Reason, as any since; yet we see they fell short in this religious Learning, which lay within the Compass of the rational Powers; whether it were that they were unable to overcome the Temptations of the World and the Flesh for want of a divine Spirit, or that the Fulness of Time was not yet come for God to be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth; or whether it were from any other Reason, yet surely so it is, that Christian Philosophy has much improv'd natural Religion, at least has made it more easy to our rational Conceptions, and more conclusive than it was before.

But we have step'd aside a little from the Conclusion of the Argument before us on the several Properties of Meekness, and its aptness to make us inherit our Portion in the Earth with Content and Satisfac-



on. Therefore I must call upon you to recapitulate briefly the Substance of the whole, that I may see whether you are clear in your Notions about it.

*P.* In the Explanation of these three Properties of Meekness, both our temporal and spiritual Felicity have come under Consideration. First, We have shewn, that Meekness implies, an humble and low Opinion of our selves, and high Reverence of our betters; by this means, we gain an Interest in great Men, a Title to their Favor, and a good Place in their Affections: and if this will not procure us a larger Inheritance, it will certainly preserve to us what Portion we have already, and put us effectually under the Care and Protection of those, who are best able to keep and defend us in the Enjoyment of our just Rights and Privileges. Secondly, We have shewn how Meekness implies also a Quietness of Spirit, and high Abhorrence of Strife and Contention. That this is the sure way to eat our Moriel of Bread with Content and Satisfaction. That the Bustles and Labor of worldly Business produce necessarily Strife and Contention in the World, and if men attend too much thereto, they can hardly avoid a State of War with one another. That therefore a just Abhorrence of these Feuds, tho' even

even attended with some Loss, is a Gain in other Respects, as it makes us meet with many Friends and preserves them to us: and Friendship is better than Riches on many Accounts. Thirdly, That it implies a Readiness to suffer rather than Revenge Injuries. That tho' Offences will come, this is to pluck out their Sting and Poison. That no one can inherit the Earth without his Proportion of Briars and Thorns; and that to strive to weed them out one by one is endless Labor, to prick our own Fingers and will not quit Cost, that the best way is to make what use we can of it with all its Incumbrances; to keep up an even Spirit under Oppression and Injuries, lest we should not be able to relish other good Things we enjoy; and if we cannot make others better, to make them no worse for our sake. In a word, to forgive from the Heart all Offences, as we trust to have our Offences forgiven us.

*D.* If this be not the safest way to inherit the Earth, I am sure the Proud, the Contentious, and the Avenger, is much more out of the right way. But, without all Peradventure, this is the only way to secure our Inheritance in Heaven, to make us truly blessed and happy hereafter.

Shew me now, in what light the Vices opposite to the several Properties of this Virtue of Meekness stand, when compared with the Blessedness of a future State? *First*, then let me suppose (for it can be but a Supposition) a proud Spirit in his ordinary Temper, self-will'd and impatient of Authority, just entring into Heaven, what can you imagine will be his Entertainment in that blessed Place?

*P.* I cannot but suppose he must see every thing there with amazing Confusion. He must be greatly astonished to see the peaceable and joyful Administration of Saints and Angels before the Throne of God, casting down their Crowns and saying, *Rev. 4. 11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory and Honor, and Power, and worshipping him that liveth for ever and ever.*

Surely this must be quite contrary to his Relish! for there is nothing to assimilate or unite with his Disposition. No Faults to reprove in Governors; no Envy at the advancement of others to Favor; no Rewards to be expected for bold and prosperous Wickedness. What can he find here to agree with his high Notions of himself, to answer his fond Expectations of Lordship and Government? Such a Spirit, when removed out of this World,  
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can find Room only in Hell to exercise and employ his wretched Temper : for if he could not be satisfied on Earth, where he met so many Objects of Frailty to wreck his Hatred upon, he must be much less so in Heaven, where there is nothing but Love, Adoration and Obedience.

*D. Secondly,* Let us again suppose a Spirit of Strife and Contention, admitted to the View and Prospect of the Blessed, in their glorified Estate. What can you think would be the Imaginations of such a Spirit in such a Place, and what Employment and Sociery could he have there ?

*P.* What such a one would have to do there, where nothing happens to break Communion and Fellowship ; where no one claims a Property in any thing to which another is not as welcome as himself ; and where *mine* and *thine* are Words of no Import or Signification at all, is not to be conceived. For this is just the Reverse of things on Earth, where we are constantly pulling and hawling from one another ; and if we were to carry this same Spirit with us to Heaven, how would it be employ'd where there is no Striving or Contention at all ; no Opposition, either given or taken, but every good thing ready for those who are worthy to receive it, before they can either ask or

*The Blessings of*

seek it ; every thing at hand that can be suppos'd or conceived to compleat the Joys of a meek and quiet Spirit. This Spirit of Strife therefore must be without any Society, must have strange Imaginations in such a peaceful Region, must, if it will be employed, descend to some less blisful State, for Company ; may find perhaps Business proper for it in the Society of the Damned, but never amongst the Blessed.

*D.* But *Thirdly*, Let us suppose a revengeful Spirit entering into the Presence of Angels and just Men made perfect. What do you conceive of such a meeting ?

*P.* Nothing of Concord or good Agreement to be sure, for there must be so great a Disparity of Sentiments, that I can imagine or conceive no sort of Intercourse between the one and the other. Here all Quarrels and Dissentions are at an end, forgotten and no more remembered ; and there is not the least Subject started or Deed offered to employ one malicious Thought upon. No Offence either given or taken. All is perfect Love, Joy and Peace abounding every where. So very different from this mortal State will it be, even to the meekest Man and most forgiving Temper upon Earth, who cannot but feel his own Sufferings,

ferings, that he will find the Change far above his Expectations; but to the revengeful, whilst he keeps that Spirit, it will be double Anxiety and Woe, to find the Happiness of the Blessed, consisting in the Likeness of God himself, rejoicing in all the lively Ideas of Goodness and Mercy and universal Charity, so very unlike his Notions of Vengeance. That Love and Affection are the Consequence of Injuries and Affronts, and must necessarily take place of Malice and Revenge, and root that evil Canker out of our Nature, before we can possibly be happy in Heaven. These, I suppose, are Images too refined to enter into a revengeful Spirit; the Uncleanliness must first out of him, before he gets there; or else he may seek rest, but will find none; so return he must elsewhere to some Aceldama, to find Spirits alike, or more wicked than himself, and where that can be, but in the Place of the damned, is hard to imagine.

D. 'Tis plain therefore that such unmeek Spirits, as the proud, the contentious and the revengeful, must have a hard Fate, if they cannot associate with the blessed in another World. But how can we suppose they should be happy any where, whilst they carry that evil Spirit about them. They may change and change for  
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ever their Place, and be wretched still, if the Mind doth not change. There lieth the Seat of Happiness; change but the Mind and it is no difficult thing to be happy.

This Representation of the Vices, opposite to the Properties of Meekness, gives us a very horrible Prospect of future Misery; and 'tis but necessary that Men's Minds should be possessed of these Notions, to avert them from such odious Principles, as are the common Plagues of all Societies of Men in the World, and tend so fatally to the Ruin and Destruction of all Happiness, either here or hereafter. But to sum up all, let me hear from you, who are those, who are notorious Offenders against this Christian Virtue of Meekness?

*P.* There are two sorts of pernicious Principles of Contention, the one on the false Foundation of Honor, the other of Law. The first is prodigal of Life itself, to gratify an angry Passion, the other is as prodigal of the Sweets and Comforts of it, out of an unaccountable Obstinacy to persist in a Cause; whether we be Gainers or Losers by it. How directly contrary, these Men of Honor, as they term themselves, and those Traffickers in Law act, to the Blessedness of inheriting the Earth.

a Child may teach them, who has more Philosophy in him at two Years old, than to burn his Fingers, tho' he be fond of the Candle, or when he is hungry to part with his Bread and Butter for a Play-thing. These are in both respects, mere trifling and childish Passions, tho' they are apt to make a Man big and wise in his own Conceit. For the gaining a Point of Honor, which must necessarily put a Man in apparent Hazard of his Life, is like squeezing and pinching up a Child by a pair of Stays, to fit his Body to a nice Suit of Clothes; and for a little Privilege or doubtful Property, which he could be easy either with or without, for a Man to contend in a vexatious Suit at Law, is like a sickly and peevish Child, quarrelling with his Nurse, because she has always too much or too little Milk in her Breasts. Both these sorts of contending Spirits, have Punishments enough in this World one would think, to make them wiser Men, and better Christians: and it is a most unaccountable Humor, to make others wretched at our own Expence. There is neither Honor, nor Profit in it, as hath been shewn already, and what Pleasure it can be, to make our selves the Pests of Society, is above all Reason to comprehend. And therefore it must be  
worthy

worthy our Notice, to look upon this Excess of Passion as an Injury we do to ourselves. Altho' we do a great deal of hurt in the World by it, yet the Damage is to no Body so much as to our selves.

**D.** You see how those who are Strangers to this Christian Virtue of Meekness deceive themselves, under the Notions of Reputation and Interest. That it is not the way to inherit the Earth, to strive and contend, that as many as we can hinder, shall have no Portion in it. There is surely Elbow-room enough in it, if we would allow others their share, and treat them as we wish to be served our selves. But if nothing will do but a State of War, we must all expect to meet with our Match one time or other. The World is generally for Harmony and Good-will amongst Men, and all civil Laws never fail to take hold of Offenders, when the Crime is for Breach of the Peace. There can be no Government in the World without such Laws, and they must have but a hard time, who reduce themselves to such a Necessity in Life, as to want one Friend to stand by them and give them Countenance. And yet this must be the Case in the End, if a Man will be in continual Quarrels and Contention with his Neighbors.



bors. The Remedy of all this Extravagance is the Virtue of Meekness, it reconciles us to the Love and Good-liking of Mankind in general, and qualifies above others all those who delight in it, with a larger Capacity to inherit the Earth.



## C H A P. IV.

**D.** **W**HAT is the next Christian Grace or Virtue which our Savior mentions with a Promise of Blessing?

*P. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

**D.** What is the true Meaning of the Words Righteousness and Hungring and Thirsting after it? Explain these first, and then give the Sense of the whole together.

**P.** Righteousness, strictly speaking, imports only our Duty towards our Neighbor, yet by the Expression of hungring and thirsting after it, there seems something more to be understood than a degree of Zeal in doing common Right and Justice between Man and Man; namely, a warm Intention of the Heart to do the whole Will of God; which therefore must take in the Duties of both Tables; our Duty towards God as well as our Duty towards our Neighbor. And in this Sense we find  
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the Scriptures make use of the Word Righteousness in other Places.

Now to judge of a strong and healthy State of Body, the way is often by the ordinary Cravings and Sharpness of the Stomach; so also in respect of the Soul, it is a good way to judge of its State, by its Appetite to Christian Duties, and therefore the Expression of hungering and thirsting after Righteousness doth very fully imply, a vigorous Zeal and fixed Purpose to fulfil God's Will, whatever it be. So that the meaning of all together is, that they are blessed, and have the Promise of being filled with the Comforts of true Piety and Holiness, who have all the Duties of Religion so at Heart, as to hunger and thirst after them, as a healthy man doth after his daily Food.

*D.* You suppose then that whoever hungers and thirsts after Righteousness, is in a good degree of spiritual Health, is arrived at some Proficiency in Gospel Learning. That he is prepared with Christian Poverty of Spirit, with godly Sorrow and Meekness, to undergo all the Duties of his Calling, and to make way for those holy and devout Cravings after a State of greater Perfection in Christian Life. Shew me therefore now, why all this Growth in Grace becomes necessary; why we cannot



not be blessed and happy with less, and why every Christian must be suppos'd to have these divine Affections in him, before he can be in a perfect State with God?

*P.* In order to explain this matter fully, I shall shew, *First*, That for any one who professeth the Christian Religion, to have but a low and poor Degree of Piety in him, is to live in an insecure and anxious State.

*Secondly*, That nothing less than a holy and pious Zeal in religious Matters, can fill the Soul with true Content, with that Blessedness which our Savior mentions, or answer to a true Spirit of Christian Piety.

*Thirdly*, That a sound and healthy State of Religion will always shew it self by its Affections, in hungering and thirsting after Righteousness, in order to fulfil the whole Will of God.

*D.* Begin then with the first, and shew me how it is to live in an insecure and anxious State, to make a Profession of the Christian Religion, and yet to have but a low and poor Degree of Piety in us?

*P.* This is most evident, because Religion is not a thing to be treated slightly or with Indifference. A Man must have always a holy Reverence for it, or else

it will do him no Service. Religion is not like our Clothes, to be put on and off as we please, or as the Fashion alters; but we must resolve to stick by it for Life, be asham'd to appear without it, honor and reverence it as the sole Mistress of our Affections; for we can never shew it more Respect and Esteem than it deserves. If we comply but for Fashion's sake, as not willing to be out of the Established Church, what Benefit will that be to the Soul, or how will it answer to the Christian Simplicity of the Gospel? For Religion, without Sincerity of Heart, is but a vain Imagination; the Shadow without the Substance: may perhaps pass upon the World for somewhat, but can never give a Man's Conscience any Satisfaction. Now this must be a very insecure State for a Christian to live in; very far from fighting the good Fight of Faith: to make a vain Profession of that which is not in him: and therefore the Ends he proposes by it are very precarious, and he must be subject surely to a great many Disappointments. For Hypocrisy is a cheat that triumphs over the World but for a time; it is always discovered in the end, and brings Shame and Trouble with it. But before God it is naked and open from the Beginning, and begets a Curse instead of a Blessing.

ing. So that it is not only an insecure way of Life, to hold Religion but in outward Profession, for it is trifling with God Almighty; and that must surely be a dreadful and anxious State, which cannot fail to breed fear and trembling also. Religion is always supposed to affect the Conscience, because in the Heart, not in the Tongue, is the seat thereof; and Conscience is a severe Monitor, and never fails to take offence at Insincerity in religious Matters.

*D*: To be religious therefore in a low degree, you understand, is only to put on the outward Form of Religion in the ordinary way, as a man calls himself a Christian, for Fashion's sake. This indeed is next to having no Religion at all, and to be sure will not satisfy Conscience by any means. For Religion is an active and lively Principle: if it stands still, and advanceth not in Degrees of Holiness and Piety, it certainly must be in a languishing and dying Condition, and the Conscience is soon alarm'd with some Evil or other to ensue of Course; so that no doubt a Christian must be both insecure and anxious in such a State. If he hath so much of the World in view, that he halteth between two Opinions, whether to serve God or *Baal*, he is a poor Novice in divine



vine Matters, and hath his Religion yet to seek; knows just so much of it, as to have the Heart to fear and dread the Difficulties, but not to engage in a Christian Warfare. We cannot suppose any Man in a State of less Security, and perhaps of more Anxiety, than in this. For he has all the Horror and Distraction, which Religion and Conscience by Fits may give him, and not any thing of the succeeding Sweets and Comforts of godly Sorrow and Mourning. Such a Man practises and tampers with his Religion and his Conscience, just as some ill Natures do with their Pets, pinch and provoke them till they bite or sting. And as for Truth and Sincerity in such Profession, there is no more Dependance on it, than in the Loyalty of a Courtier who puts on his Embroidery on a State Day.

But shew me now in the second Place, that nothing less than a holy and pious Zeal in religious Matters can fill the Soul with any true Content, with that Blessedness which our Savior mentions, or answer to a true Spirit of Christian Piety?

*P.* The Blessedness of being filled for hungering and thirsting after Righteousness, implies a large measure of Delight and Satisfaction, in having our Desires satisfied to the full. Now this supposes no less than

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than that there must be in all those, who pretend to a Christian Spirit of Piety, some Degree of zealous and intent Affections; for they that have no Cravings want no Food, and to be filled with more than we Desire, can be no sort of Blessing. I take it therefore that Christian Piety is resolute and active, always endeavouring to compass its End; and that its Hungrings and Thirstings encrease daily, till that end be in some measure obtained, so far at least as to answer our Expectations for the present; for this is some sort of Blessing, in that it creates Satisfaction, such as breeds Content; and it is somewhat to know how far our Desires go and where they will end. For the Unhappiness of human Nature consists in that it is always craving and never satisfied, new Desires creep into the Heart daily, and as one is quench'd, another kindles, so that there is a perpetual succession of Passions and Affections to perplex us with Cares and Inquietudes, and there is nothing but a true Spirit of Christian Piety can allay this impetuous Thirst in us. But when we have banished this sort of lustful Affections, and spiritualiz'd our Nature by our Application to religious Duties, our Affections begin to change with our Condition, from temporal to spiritual Things, and the Soul is  
filled

filled with Gratifications answerable and proportionate to its Affections, and rests satisfied in the Enjoyment of them. Thus are they filled, that is, abundantly satisfied, who hunger and thirst after Righteousness, not after the Things of this World, wherein there can be no true Satisfaction, not because their Desires are less intense, but in placing some end to their Desires; and who fix and settle in a steady Prosecution of that end, which is the ultimate end of all, wherein there is Joy without Changeableness, Joy which banishes all other Desires whatsoever.

*D.* True Contentment therefore, you see doth not depend on the Gratification of one or other of our Passions, but on that Complacency of Mind, which follows on a settled course of Action. For all Passion is but the Spur to Action; something accidental, that has neither Good nor Evil in it more, than as it is well or ill applied. It may indeed contribute for a time to our Happiness, but when that is over, it leaves no real Pleasure behind it: Nay it is oft so far from it, that sometimes it causes Discontent, purely because the Gratification of the Passion is of so short Continuance. And therefore true Contentment must center in something not



so volatile and unsettled, something that is permanent; which leaves the Mind in a free State; not agitated with a Hurry of Spirits, but calmly attending to the prosecution of its own Purposes; when Men's Manners are steady, and correspond with the chief End propos'd in one uniform and settled Course of Action. How readily do we fall into a Habit of doing every thing we conceive to be our Duty, when we have made it easy to comply with holy Offices and moral Duties from a Sense of Religion, that being the proper Business of a rational Soul. A Man so fixed and settled in his Principles, has no other Notions but how to excel in Piety, and all good Works; nothing less than a holy and devout Zeal can fill his Soul, which is evermore aspiring higher and mounting towards God. That Spirit within him so invigorates all his Thoughts and Actions, that he begins with St. Paul

Phil. 3. 8. *to count all things but Loss, for the Excellence of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.* Can any lukewarm Zeal of *Laodicean* Principles raise up this Spirit? Wretched, miserable and poor must he be, whose Notions of Religion carry him but half way in his Duty. The Soul cannot be affected with dead Works, no more than the living God; it is of a spiritual

ritual Nature, too refined to solace itself with less than divine and spiritual Things; such as Prayers and Praises, holy and devout Meditations, and the blessed Fruits of a good Life, brotherly Love and Charity. Can you imagine any one, whose Soul is in this blessed Estate, so filled with Joy and Comfort, can have any true Contentment of Mind but in religious Matters? That he can fix on any thing for Happiness below Heaven, and those divine Offices which are to prepare him for it? Will he stop short and rest upon any transitory Enjoyments here, who knows his whole Life is little enough to spend, in Improvements of the Soul, to qualify it for heavenly Enjoyments? Surely that which is the end of all his Wishes, and which alone is able to satisfy all the Hungrings and Thirstings after Righteousness and godly Living, will enhance the Price, and make him think he can never do too much to gain his Expectations. All other things which lead him out of this View must be Rubs in his Way, and discompose his Spirit. For he is always looking forward in a strait Line as the End directs: Whatever conspires to answer his Purpose, is Joy, whatever against it, is hateful and an

Abomination to him. This is his resolute way of acting up to the Spirit of Religion, not to lose one Moment's Opportunity in satisfying his hungry and thirsty Soul, in following the grand Concern of his Life, or from pressing on for the high Prize of his Calling.

It has now been proved, that a constant and uniform Practice of religious Duties, is the Result of that zealous Spirit of Christian Piety, which is required to fill the Soul with Contentment, and that nothing less than such a Spirit can partake of that Blessedness which our Savior promises. Shew me now in the third Place, how a sound and healthy State of Religion will shew it self by its Affections in hungry and thirsting after Righteousness, in order to fulfil the whole Will of God.

*P.* Let me first explain to you what I understand by a sound and healthy State of Religion.

Now I mean such a State, as has its Cravings and Appetites, in an orderly and regular Manner. For when there appears anything irregular in them or out of Order, it is always an Argument of a sickly State; of some Disease, which presses hard to a Degree of Excess, which we may well suppose to affect the Soul with Damage or  
Loss.



Loss. In the Body we call it a false Appetite, when there is a craving for Meats improper for Digestion, or of more Food than the Stomach can bear; which is so far from supporting, that it enfeebles the Body, and affects it with loss of Vigor and Spirits. And to the Soul, the Damage is just the same, whenever a blind or enthusiastick Zeal, which is but a false Appetite to hungring and thirsting after Righteousness, transports a Man to make use of wrong Measures, which is like improper Meats; or to take any irregular and violent Steps, which is like loading the Stomach with too much Food, in the Cause of Religion. So that a sound and healthy State, always requires orderly and regular Motions and Appetites, altho' we suppose these very Motions, to be strong and vigorous when there is Occasion, that is, when the Motion is founded on a good Principle; not on a false Appetite. Taking therefore a sound and healthy State of Religion in this light, I say there always follows such a State, a settled and fixed Intention to do the whole Will of God; and our Affections shew it by hungring and thirsting after Righteousness, and that for these two Reasons,

*The Blessings of*

*First*, Because in such a State a Man always acts upon a Principle of Love.

*Secondly*, Because whilst he remains in that State; he will be always striving and endeavouring after Perfection, to imitate God, and be as like him as he can.

*D.* Shew me that in a healthy State of Religion, where our Affections are strong, and shew that we build upon sound Principles, there is always a settled Intention to do the whole Will of God, because in such a State a Man acts upon a Principle of Love.

*P.* There are many ends propos'd by Men for doing and executing the same Action. Either Riches, or Pleasures, or Interest, have Power to influence one and the same Action to be done, and yet these are different Ends propos'd. Nay even in Religion Men may have several Ends in view, but the Worth and Value of the Action is according to the Excellence of the end aim'd at. Now a sound and healthy State will soon shew whereunto our Aims tend by our Affections, which are then strong and vigorous. He that is always hungry and thirsting after Righteousness shews, that he is laboring after the true end of all Religion, the Glory of God and his own Salvation; and that he must unite himself to God, as the Ob-  
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ject of his Love, to have his Desires satisfied. Zealous and warm Affections to our Duty, are strong Arguments of our Love to him unto whom we direct it, for if we were moved by any worse Principle, we should certainly be deficient in the Service, and want those necessary Cravings which appear in a healthy State. So that while these Affections remain in us, the Zeal with which we exercise ourselves shews plainly that we act upon a Principle of Love.

Now he that is religious upon this Principle will have God in all his Thoughts, aim and direct all his Actions to please him, and all secondary ends he proposes to himself will be evermore consistent with the main end. He can then have no false Appetites to indulge, but a constant uniform Attachment to fulfil the Will of God, keeps his Thoughts always from wandering and going astray. For it is the Property of Love, to cast out every thing that is contrary to or in dis-esteem with the Object belov'd, as well as to seek after and pursue Things which are agreeable to it. If the Soul exerts it self in an extraordinary manner, hungry and thirsting after this or that Duty of Religion, what is it but to offer more endearing Characters of its Love to God? To  
exem-



exemplify its various Appetites upon the Foot of one and the same Principle, directing and applying every different Action to one and the same end.

D. 'Tis certain it is a very easy thing to go on in a round of Duty and Service, when we fix our Notions of Religion on the Center of Love; and we may take as large a Compass as we please in our Thoughts and Imaginations, and not give into one irregular Motion, whilst we direct every step we take in our whole Progress by it. For there is no stinting this divine Passion or confining it to Bounds. When once it hath taken Root in the Heart, it grows upon us daily, and aboundeth more and more in Knowledge and in all Judgment, filling us with the Fruits of Righteousness, and approving things that are excellent;

Phil. 1. 6. *that when the good Work is once begun in us, we may not want the good will to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ;* as the Apostle speaks. But all religious Actions, proceeding not from this Principle, have a great Mixture of Weakness and Imperfection in them; something of a false Appetite accompanied with Cravings after the things of this World; and it is well if they go down without a bitter Relish, without Fear and Torment. No doubt in a sound and healthy State when  
God-

Godliness exerts it self with Vigor and Spirit, it can never remain unactive, or without hungering and thirsting after Righteousness. For it is as natural for a Man in such a State, to elevate his Soul to the superior Degrees of Love and Piety, as it is to a sound and healthy Body to eat and drink. For spiritual Exercises are but the proper Food of the Soul, which it necessarily requires for satisfying its Appetite, and without which it must languish and fall into some sickly Estate. And therefore these Cravings aim at no less than fulfilling the whole Will of God, in whatsoever can best endear us to him: and what is that but acting upon a Principle of Love.

Shew me now, Secondly, that in this healthy State of Religion, a Christian aims at no less than doing the whole Will of God, because by his Cravings and Affections he shews, that he is always striving and endeavouring after a State of Perfection, to imitate God himself, and be as like him as he can?

P. That he hath this aim at Heart is evident, by his seeking upon all occasions, to conform his Will and Intentions to the Will and Intentions of God. For such a one knows he is under an Obligation of Duty to God, upon the strictest  
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Ties of Love and Gratitude; that his Soul is filled with holy Joy, all the while he is exercis'd in the Service of God; he can never therefore serve him in partial but in perfect and universal Obedience. He knows that he is directed in his Duty by Laws of a divine Original, Laws which manifest the Perfection of God's Nature, and will make us all resemble him in some respect, if we act up to them to the best of our Capacity; that it is our Interest, as well as Glory, to come as near him as we can, in such Perfections of his as we are able to copy after: to seek in our Degree to be good, righteous, holy and merciful, and to make all these answer the Perfection of our Nature; that in so doing we may hold some Resemblance with God in being holy, and just, and merciful as he is, making these Imitations of the divine Nature the Measure and Standard of our Life and Manners.

No doubt do all we can we shall come vastly short of those Perfections in God, for such is the Frailty of our Nature, that something often intervenes to hinder us from doing all we might; in the soundest and healthiest Estate we sleep often, and sometimes faint under holy Exercises; but then a good Constitution will soon recover a fresh Appetite again, and altho' it  
may



may not do the work of Righteousness perfectly, yet it will hunger and thirst after it, and aim at doing, according to its Abilities, every good Work in some Degree of Perfection; and in such Cases God is so good and merciful, as to accept the Will for the Deed. Hence assuredly follows a Conformity at least in our Wills to his Will, altho' we execute our Designs but very imperfectly. But it is a great matter to the good Execution of a Thing, to will well to it. When a Man's Mind is so prepared, he guides every step with Discretion; he is apt to cast about for means to make his Purposes succeed well; when he meets with a Rub he struggles to overcome it, tries every Method to remove the Impediment, that he may proceed in his Course. This Steadiness and Resolution he owes to his healthy State, it teaches him Foresight as well as Diligence, to expect Difficulties in a Christian Course, and wisely to allow somewhat for casual Accidents in the means, so as he be not disappointed in the End. A Christian who has such a Will, such Cravings and Intentions, may very well hope to do the whole Will of God, by looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of his Faith, and by imitating him in his Virtues.

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*D.* So that, you suppose this godly Imitation is the natural Effect of a sound and healthy State of Religion; and well you may. For to what other end can all our religious Cravings and Appetites in such a State lead, but to the Enjoyment of God, the Fountain of all our Joy? And the only way to enjoy him, is to spiritualize our selves in order to communicate with his Spirit; that we may imitate and come as near him as we can, in those communicable Attributes of his Nature, which have some Correspondence and Relation to our own Being. And what is all this? but aiming at the whole Duty of a Christian, and to take all Opportunities of recommending our selves to God's Favor. 'Tis neither more nor less than shewing the true State of Religion we are in; that all our Cravings are for spiritual Ends, and our Appetites stir'd up from no false Principle; that whatever is our Duty becomes a Pleasure to us, and that our Pleasures are of such a Nature, that we are not satisfied with them till we stand in some degree of Perfection before God; that in order to go as high as we can, we endeavor with all our might to imitate the divine Perfections, and to conform all our Designs and Intentions to the Designs and Intentions of God; that there

there may be no Defect, if possible, in us, in executing perfect Obedience to his holy Will, at least to shew that where we fail, it is more thro' the Infirmities of our Nature, than Obstinacy or any perverse Will, and that otherwise we are in a sound and healthy State of Religion.

You see therefore and understand, from whence this Beatitude of hungry and thirsting after Righteousness proceeds, and whither it tends. That a low and ordinary degree of Religion cannot aspire to it, for that is a very insecure and anxious State of Life, for a Christian to rest upon and confide in. That this hungry and thirsting after Righteousness, never fails of producing true Content, and to have all its Appetites and Cravings fully answered and satisfied. That these are sure Arguments of our being in a sound and healthy State, in a State of Perfection in the sight of God, and they never fail to beget in us a Love of him, and an earnest Desire of being like him; which is surely the highest end of Happiness we can aim at. Now if after all this we find not in us these Cravings and holy Appetites, we cannot surely be in any good and perfect State; for you see that a sound and healthy State of Religion cannot be without them,



them, no more than a sound and healthy Body without an Appetite to Meat.

*P.* I observe that there are some Christians who make a great Bustle about the holy Offices of Religion, who in some other respects seem but moderately affected to it, spend much time in the Preparation for a solemn Duty, and forget it as soon as it is over.

*D.* This shews plainly, that such are not in a sound and healthy State, there is some hidden Cause, which like a Disease is secretly preying upon them: Some Bosom Sin, that gets the better of their Resolutions, or else they indulge too much in the things of the World, which makes them soon weary of their Duty. Labor they ought therefore to amend their State; to examine and try themselves by the Rule of God's Commandments, to find out where they are apt to be overtaken by the Snares of Temptation, or to be deficient in Duty, to reform and watch. Let them not imagine they have a Spirit of Religion in them, because they have sometimes a false Appetite, some Cravings after this or that Duty by Fits and Starts, in an irregular and unsteady manner, and it may be sometimes from no good Principle; or because they seem to treat Religion openly with Regard, and pay always

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an outward Deference to it; are willing to comply in all, except some few Favorite Points, wherein they find it hard to get the better of themselves. This shews manifestly a want of a good Appetite to Religion, that you are for picking and chusing Ipiritual Food, not for sake of true Nourishment but Humor. You must know therefore that this is a Disease, which will grow daily more and more upon you, if you be not uniform and universal in your Obedience, and have not your Eye evermore fixed upon the ultimate end of all, your everlasting Happiness. Then, you will perceive clearly what is to be partial in your Obedience, and what to do the whole Will of God. You will soon begin to feel these Cravings of Hunger and Thirst after Righteousness, advancing gradually, and agreeably within your Mind; not as crude Appetites, to rise and fall by Fits, or to provoke the Stomach, as at a superfluous Feast; to eat and feed on some Delicacies, and reject good and wholesome Meats; but in a continual longing for spiritual Food of all kinds, as the proper Nourishment of the Soul, which you are never to refuse when set before you, and which you cannot want without Hurt and Detriment for daily Sustenance. By this it

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is we must frame a true Judgment of the Health of our Souls. If we find this a difficult Matter, yet we must consider that it is no less than necessary, if we seek for a true and sound State of Religion, and wish to be blessed with that Satisfaction and Fulness, which our Savior promileth for hungering and thirsting after our Duty. *For as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so faith without Works* (which are the constant Effect of these Cravings) *is dead also*, saith St. James. We must therefore account our selves no better than dead in Trespasses and Sins, if we want a large Measure of this Spirit of Religion, this lively and active Principle, sufficient to keep up our Appetites in proportion to our Duty.

But by this I mean not any of those irregular Motions, which are apt to transport us out of all Reason, such as are excited by a Degree of Passion, like that we feel in our selves in the Prospect and Enjoyment of Pleasures of Sense; because the Nature of spiritual and heavenly Things, and Things of the Earth, is vastly different, and our Passions are moved after the one and the other in a very different manner. There is also in the Body a sort of Mechanism, that disposeth it to be affected sometimes to its own Hurt  
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and Prejudice, by things which it exceedingly longeth for. But in the Soul, as there can be no excess of Joy, it being of so capacious a Nature, so the highest Pitch we can raise our Cravings to, can never discompose us, or lead to any irregular Motion or Degree of Transport, like that of our Bodies when moved by Passion, where there happens often something unseemly and out of order. Therefore a zealous Desire in the Mind, succeeded by a Love of holy Exercises, is an ample Demonstration to us, that we do not want that Craving of the Spirit which argues a sound State, altho' we pretend not to sudden Effusions and enthusiastick Motions, which some Zealots are fond to ascribe to a divine Illumination. And thus a Christian may be well assured of his own spiritual Condition, and form a true Judgment of what State he is in, as to spiritual Affairs; whether he hath true or false Appetites to Holiness, or confides in the outward or inward Profession of Religion.

*P.* I perceive then, that there is much prudential Knowledge acquir'd, by hungering and thirsting after Righteousness; for we learn by this means, how to know and mark what is good and hurtful to us in our Appetites, in order to make a proper

use of every Opportunity to improve both in Understanding and Manners; and therefore this begets in us an unweary'd Application, or Habit, both to think and do always Things consonant to right Reason and Religion: and that must surely put us out of all Fear or Despondency in doing our Duty to God, or of falling short of his Blessing.

*D.* You observe well, that there is much prudential Knowledge in this Beatitude; but that is not all, for there is also much sublime Wisdom and Christian Philosophy in it. For what can be a higher or more excellent Study, than to know how, and what it is, to be in Union and Communion with God? We account it necessary, for the better Information and Improvement of the Understanding, to carry the Mind off sometimes from sensible Objects, and to fix it in the Contemplation of Things invisible, abstracted, and of a spiritual Nature; This in the Schools goes under the Name of philosophical Learning; for the rational Faculties, as well as the sensitive, are much improv'd by Exercise and moderate Application to their proper Function; and doth not the thirstings and hungrings of the Soul after Righteousness, seem to be an inward Call, to engage us in the Study of spiritual Things,

Things, in order to improve us in the Learning and Philosophy of the Gospel? where ye may be able to comprehend with Eph. 3. 18, 19. all Saints, what is the Breadth and Length and Depth and Height; and to know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God. The Philosophy of the World, before Christ brought Life and Immortality to light, was an intricate, uncertain and unsatisfactory Study, there was indeed by it enough discovered to cause our Admiration, but little to inform us of spiritual Affairs, as to any useful or good Purposes. Even the wisest and best Philosophers confest their Ignorance herein; they felt within them some Cravings of the Mind after the incomprehensible Things of God, but they were not affected with a divine Love of them, so as to have any Longings, like the hungings and thirstings after Righteousness in the Gospel Sense, of which they knew not how to form any Conceptions equal to the Divinity of them, and therefore they were no way filled with this Knowledge. They were at a loss where to begin or where to end in this Enquiry. Convinc'd and satisfied they might be, that there was such a thing as Science, or Wisdom which is able to comprehend things ab-



stracted from Matter, and therefore above  
 the reach of all sensative Cogitations, and  
 that by the help of Reason, they were  
 able with some certainty to conceive and  
 define Things, which had no real Being  
 or Existence more than in the Mind; but  
 in Things spiritual, and Things which con-  
 cerned the Soul, which were of real Use  
 and Advantage to its well-being hereafter,  
 they were as ignorant as the unlearned;  
 for there was more of Curiosity, than  
 true Religion in all their Enquiries. But  
 the Philosophy of the Gospel hath a more  
 divine End in view, and puts our Specu-  
 lations on a more certain foundation, and  
 shews us how these holy Cravings of the  
 Soul are to be filled and satisfied. Teach-  
 eth that they *who are in Christ Jesus*  
*walk after the Spirit; and that they*  
*5, who walk after the Spirit, do mind the*  
*6, things of the Spirit; and to be spiritu-*  
*ally minded is Life and Peace; for as*  
*14, many as are led by the Spirit of God,*  
*they are the Sons of God.* That is, they  
 are regenerated, and as God's Children,  
 are to be *translated by the Father into*  
*19, the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom*  
*all Fulness dwelleth.* All true Wisdom,  
 in the Gospel Sense, entreth by the Heart  
 and not by the Understanding, in things  
 which are of a divine and spiritual Nature.

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*The Things of God knoweth no Man, but the Spirit of God;* and therefore St. Paul explains the Darkness of the Understanding by the Term, *Blindness of the Heart*; that is, when the Heart is past feeling those holy Admonitions of the Spirit.

All spiritual Knowledge most certainly is the Gift of God; the natural Man knoweth it not, because it is spiritually discerned; so that to be filled with this Wisdom is to seek it from God, to hunger and thirst after it, not as a thing you are entitled to by Nature, but by Grace. The wise Heathens failed and fell short of it, because they thought it was to be acquired by human means, by diligent Study and the Improvements of Learning; but the Christian Philosopher builds his Knowledge on the Foundation of God's own Revelation of divine Matters, upon Faith and the Promises of the Gospel.



## C H A P. V.

D. **W**HAT is the next Beatitude mentioned by our Savior?

P. *Blessed are the Merciful, for they shall obtain Mercy.*

This godly Disposition of shewing Mercy, very aptly follows the Grace of hungry and thirsting after Righteousness, for it is impossible, I think, to be piously affected towards God, and not to shew something of a godly Spirit towards our Neighbor.

D. You judge very rightly of this matter, for the Miseries of Mankind are so many and great, that we cannot suppose any State of Life in this World wholly free, and without some degree of Indigency and Want, of one Nature or other, and therefore if Men have any Religion in them, or true Regard to their own Fellow-Creatures, they are bound to help one another, otherwise there would be no well-being in this World, nor Christian Charity to entitle them to it in the other.

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This Necessity ought to make it our Choice also; because it is manifestly our Interest in this present Life, in as much as we know, that we cannot with any Comfort live without the help of one another, and if we help others upon Occasion, we have reason to hope for, and expect the like help from them again. This Disposition begets a free and generous Compassion of Mind for other Men's Miseries, represents their Distresses in the tenderest Manner calling for help, and by a kind of Sympathy in Nature, moves us with a sort of Pain and Grief, till we contribute our Endeavors to make the miserable happy. Thus Compassion is the natural Effect of Grief, raised in the Mind at the distress'd Condition of another, and there is something of Nature, besides the Promise of Blessing, which in part works us up to Delight in acts of Mercy.

*P.* Is it therefore always a Christian and human Action to commiserate a Man's Distress in all Circumstances, and shew him Mercy, whether he deserves it or no?

*D.* To shew him Mercy, so as to set him free, and at Liberty from present Distress, is not always requisite and fitting, tho' we cannot but pity his Sufferings; because a Man may justly be under Distress

tress for his own Default, and the Con-  
 sequence thereof be some righteous Pu-  
 nishment by Law ; and altho' Commise-  
 ration be the Effect of another's Distress,  
 yet all Distress may not deserve our Mer-  
 cy ; therefore that merciful Disposition is  
 only then a Virtue, when the Misery of  
 another is within the just Power of be-  
 ing help'd by us, and also requires and  
 deserves our help. Thus it is plain that a  
 Man is to make use of his Reason, as well  
 as Compassion in every Act of Mercy,  
 otherwise it may possibly be no Virtue.  
 Those are justly said to be merciful, who  
 are helpful to others in consideration,  
 that they are distressed in their Circum-  
 stances, either in Body, Goods or Name,  
 by some Evils not altogether either of  
 their own procuring, or within their Power  
 to avoid, from some casual Accident,  
 but yet are within our Power to remedy  
 in a good Measure. In such Cases we  
 are to call in our Reason to judge of these  
 Circumstances, and if it be fit to help  
 them, we ought to do it as far, as is con-  
 sistent with Justice to ourselves and others.  
 He then that suffers and wants our Help,  
 must first be supposed to lie under some  
 evil Accident of Life, which in the ge-  
 neral, as to our own Knowledge, we  
 think he doth not deserve, before he can  
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in Strictness be said, to demand our merciful Compassion. For altho' there is a Motion towards Compassion in us by natural Sympathy, yet this I call not the Motive towards shewing Mercy, till reason be brought in to judge of the Circumstance; and therefore there is a Difference between Pity, which is the natural Effect of our tender Apprehension of anothers Sufferings, and Pity which ariseth from considering the Circumstances of the Sufferer; the one may raise the Passion, but it is the Circumstance must bring that Passion into the Act of shewing Mercy; otherwise Mercy may be ill placed and far from a Virtue.

*P.* But may it not so happen, that a particular Friend falls into Distress by some rash Action; may have committed Murder or some other notorious Crime, that the Law will certainly take hold of, and he in the utmost Danger, if I do not use all my Interest to preserve him in this sad Circumstance. Must I therefore disregard or neglect my Friend, to whom I am bound by the dearest Relation, because his Cause is bad? May I not use my best Endeavors to bring him off at his Trial, or must I refuse to hide and conceal him from the Course of Justice? The Laws of Friendship seem to oblige me to give him



him Protection, as far as lieth in my Power.

D. The Laws of Friendship, must by no means interfere either with the Laws of God, or of my Country. You know who hath said, *Whoso sheddeth Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed.* Gen. 9. 6. Murder is a crying Sin against all Law both human and divine, and must not go unpunished in this World. Besides you mistake very much the Laws of Friendship, when under that pretence, you pretend to befriend a Murderer so, as to contrive means unjust or fallacious to screen him from Justice. For Murder is an Offence of a publick Nature, which private Friendship must not controul; 'tis such an Assault, that all Mankind have an Interest in, to see punished as the Law directs; and if you take part with such a Friend, by concealing of Evidence, or other fraudulent means to free him from the Penalty of the Law, which in some Countries is called high Treason, you your self are highly criminal, and may suffer for Misprision of Treason. And do you think that you are bound to bring yourself into Condemnation, for the sinful and evil Conduct of your Friend, or that there is any thing of Charity or Mercy in such unlawful Behavior? Put the Case in the strongest

strongest Light; suppose he had preserv'd your own Life, or your House and Family from Robbers and Highway-Men, and had thereby highly merited your Friendship: Would you therefore forfeit your own Life to the Law, to preserve his in a criminal Cause? Your Friendship may shew itself in many other Instances more generous, more charitable and more christian. You may express your Sorrow for him in as publick a Manner as you please; give him all the friendly Advice his sad Circumstance requires, support him with necessary requisites for Maintenance, as well as ghostly Council, during the time the Law permits him to remain in this World, and take care of his Family after he is out of it. This is surely the whole is incumbent on you, to do, by the Laws of Friendship. 'Tis a blind Friendship that pretends to serve a Friend's Cause, right or wrong; and generally a Man suffers for it, even in this World, according as our Country Proverb, (*Save a Thief from the Gallows, &c.*) shrewdly prophesieth.

But sure it must be a lamentable thing to consider, that all the Evil which may possibly follow, on preserving such a Criminal by my means, must be put to my Account at the Day of Judgment, when  
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I am called not only to answer for my own, but for my Friends Sins!

*P.* I find therefore that there can be neither Friendship nor Fellowship, inconsistent either with the Laws of God or our Country, and that to be merciful in the christian Acceptation of the Word, and also with Regard to human Policy, requireth no more than to relieve a distressed Friend, whenever we may do it with a safe Conscience, and for publick Good; that a criminal Action must not change its Nature in the Judgment of the dearest Friend, and tho' the Bonds of Relation, may indeed make the Case more pitiful, yet our Compassion must give way to Reason and Justice. For Mercy is to be weighed and considered, with respect to Good and Evil to succeed, and to make it beneficial to publick Life, it must be always superior to private Interest, altho' we be under the Influence of human Nature, in its tenderest Regard for the Well-being of a Friend.

*D.* But in the Gospel Sense, under the Notion of Charity, is not Mercy of much greater extent, than this moral Virtue was formerly supposed to be.

*P.* Yea surely. For it requires not only our Compassion for indifferent Persons under Distress, when they deserve  
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and need our help, which is as far as the moral Virtue goes in shewing Mercy, but also for those who have ill deserv'd at our Hands, Enemies, as the World calls them, as well as Friends and Neighbors.

*D.* Herein, you may observe, how the Christian Philosophy of the Gospel excels, and is far more sublime than any other Learning whatsoever. It considers Mankind, not as Friends and Foes, but as related together in Brotherhood; and a Christian knows no Enemy of his Family but the Devil. A peevish and unkind Brother he may; but as being such, he forgives him; and is not slack to shew him Mercy for God's sake, under whose Protection he is upon every Occasion. So that tho' Reason be always the Guide in the Manner, yet Christian Charity is the Motive to shewing Mercy. And Charity is so comprehensive a Duty, that as it takes in all Persons under our special Consideration, so there is not one Action we do to one another, but is more or less swayed by it. For if the whole Law be comprehended in this one Precept, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbor as thy self*, as our Savior says; then Charity is the great Motive of acting up to that Law. 'Tis the Fountain from whence all our Benificence and Kindness proceeds; not only

Mar. 12.  
31.

ly influencing and commanding to do common Right and Justice, but also to do all the Good we can to our Neighbor; not in a narrow and limited Sense, but in a Sense as extensive as the Species of Mankind; to assist every one upon Occasion, with our best Services, both in spiritual and temporal Matters, to the parting even with some share of our substance for his Benefit; to consider all his Wants and Necessities and to help him freely. When we consider the Nature of this universal Charity, how it operates for publick Good, the Good of all Mankind, and tendeth to the Preservation of the Creatures of God in a State of Well-being, we cannot but see and admire, how much Christianity has improved the State of Nature, and opened the Eyes of our rational Understanding in a number of things, such as we of our selves could not easily have found out, and yet by the Law of Nature required at the Hands of Men; particularly this Law of Charity, *do as thou wouldst be done to*: A Fundamental Article for the good of Society, and of Universal Extent, to explain the intimate and sacred Relation of Mankind to one another, and yet was never sufficiently understood, till published to the World by the Gospel of Christ Jesus. So far

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far hath our natural Understanding been darkned, that Men have not discerned even gross Iniquity to be a Sin. Many antient and some modern Philosophers have argued, that until the Laws of Society took Place, Men were under no manner of Obligation to one another, but were left to themselves by Nature, as in a State of War, to contest for Life and Property as they thought fit: And tho' this be as wild and barbarous a Notion as can well be imagined, yet it is probable, that the Reason which induced Men first to incorporate together in a Body, and under a particular Form of Government was, as well to restrain the Violence of such brutal Spirits, as were found to think in this unfociable Manner, as for mutual Conveniencies of Life in other Respects. Oppression is a natural Evil, or at least flows from a Defect of natural Rectitude of Mind, to confess a Right of Property to be in any one, and tho' Men by Nature were convinc'd, that this stood against all Law both human and divine, yet it was not so generally confessed in the World, that the opposite Virtue of shewing Mercy extended any farther than to Friends and Relations, either in Government or Blood; till Christianity shewed us that we were all Citizens of the World

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and Brethren of Christ Jesus, and so linked together by Bonds of Relation not before thought of. So that if this Law of the Gospel had never been revealed, by the Prevalence of evil Custom, and the Degeneracy and Ignorance of Mankind, 'tis probable we should not to this day have had any true Notions of the Nature of Charity, or the natural Obligation as well as divine, which it ought to have, for the well-being of Mankind in this World; much less should we have had the least Notion, that it could ever be of Use or Advantage, for our Happiness and well-being hereafter. Thus Christianity hath taught us how to understand, and how to improve the Laws of Nature, by adapting to them the positive Laws of God; and the Evidence of God's own Testimony added, for an Illustration and Confirmation of natural Law, must be no little strengthening of them. For there are many things possible by the light of Nature to be discerned, which however few by natural Capacity find out. How few of the Antients, by the subtlest Wit, were able to discover the Immortality of the Soul, a Point of Learning so necessary to be instructed in; and yet God had appointed natural means to lead us into such a Knowledge. But Man having disabled

abled himself, to attend to those means of improving Knowledge, there was a Necessity of Revelation to inform him better, even in those Points wherein he was deficient, not by reason of the Imbecility of his Nature, but by reason of his Frowardness and Slothfulness, to exert his Faculties to the height of their Capacity. By which it appeareth, how much we are bound to acknowledge the Goodness of God, for this farther free Gift of an explanatory Law, to improve the light of Nature, which the Corruptions of the World had eclips'd, by the Interposition of Evil Customs; not only by positive Precepts, to illustrate natural and moral Duties, but also supernatural, such as could not possibly have been otherwise known to the World, that so they might both together serve effectually to direct us in our Duty; that neither the Abuse of our own natural Powers, nor the divine Malediction for the Transgression of our first Parents, might be longer any Prejudice to our Salvation, but that seeing the Will of God plainly both in the Book of Nature and Revelation, we might have nothing to affect us in any manner, but for our own Good and eternal Happiness.

Human Philosophy therefore did not arrive at any true Notion of evangelical

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Charity.

Charity. *Socrates*, who went so far as to profess himself a Citizen of the World, did indeed thereby shew a Superiority of Genius, in his extensive Desire of being in Communion and Fellowship with all Mankind, but I cannot find he had the least Notion of Love and Charity to Enemies. This is a divine Lesson of Knowledge, to be learnt no where but in the Philosophy of the Gospel; by the Revelation of Christ's Love to Mankind, we see his Charity was universal, and that ours must be so too, or else we forfeit our interest in him. Herein is the Spring and Fountain, and the End and Perfection of all Religion, the *Alpha* and *Omega* of Christian Doctrine.

But to proceed to the particular Disquisition of this Beatitude of shewing Mercy; let me understand how it is in its Nature a Blessing.

*P.* To the Indigent, who feel the immediate Influence of it, no doubt, it must be a very acceptable Blessing: and if we consider the matter rightly in the Sense of St. *Paul*, who records it as the Words of the Lord Jesus, *It is more blessed to give, than to receive*, we shall find, that this Distribution of Blessings, by way of Charity to others, is a Comfort and Blessing to ourselves, and in

Acts 20.  
35.



in the End, will prove greatly to our Interest: For these three Reasons,

*First*, Because all Acts of Mercy are attended with present complacency of Mind to the Doer, and with the Blessings of the Indigent.

*Second*, Because shewing Mercy is a beneficent Affection, which brings us to a near Resemblance of God.

*Third*, Because it hath the Promise of future Blessings in the Life to come, if it fails us in this.

As to the *First*, All Acts of Mercy, &c.

As another's Distress naturally produceth Anxiety and Pity, in the Mind of a merciful Man; so the freeing and relieving him by our means, gives us a proportionate Joy and Pleasure; for the first Motive to our Anxiety is his Distress, which when removed, the Anxiety ceases of course. But in a beneficent Mind, there is something more than a Cessation of Grief and Anxiety, at doing a merciful Act, there is always some degree of positive Joy remaining after, something that refresheth the Mind, and makes it more than easy. There is hereby Occasion given, for laying up much matter of Consolation against an evil Day, of furnishing our Memory with a pleasing Thought of the good

done by our means, and consequently the Reflection on what is past, adds somewhat to our present and future Felicity. Next to being our selves freed from Distress, it is the greatest Satisfaction, a truly generous and christian Mind can have, to free others; for there is always a Communication of Joy, betwixt him that receives and him that gives, in all Acts of Mercy. If the bare Importunity of the miserable, may make a Man sometimes do a beneficent Action, purely to be rid of an impertinent Sollicitor, how much rather will he choose to do it, and take pleasure therein, when it answers his natural Disposition, and is enforced by the Equity and Prevalency of the Cause he hath at heart. To such a Spirit well disciplined in Charity, every Opportunity of shewing Tenderness to the Afflicted, gives new Life, and administers fresh Matter of Joy, to fill the Soul with Delight; for the Heart has always the greatest share in a merciful Action; the Understanding guides and conducts, but it is the Heart which enjoys it. So that the Affections being wrought upon must be satisfied, and then Joy enters the Mind; and Complacency cannot but follow; especially when the Blessing of the Indigent is considered,

to wait always and attend upon the merciful Doer.

D. You suppose then that there is some weight in the Blessings of the Poor. *The C. 5. 16.*

*Effectual fervent Prayer of the righteous*, we know from St. James, *availeth much* in time of Sicknes; and no doubt, at all Times, the Blessings of Prayer for the good of others are welcome. For however little regarded by worldly minded Men, a Prayer from a zealous Heart in our behalf is a Satisfaction, which a good Christian will find cause of Comfort in, especially in time of Affliction, if he can reflect and say of himself and his past Services, with holy Job, in this manner.

*When the Ear heard me, then it blessed me, and when the Eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the Poor that cried, the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the Widows heart to sing for Joy.* *Job 29. 11. 12, 13.*

There is nothing sure, can make a Man tast with such Pleasure the good of his own Actions, as such a Reflection as this, when his own Glory is as it were shining round about him, and he is sunning himself in the Rays thereof. Good were it that Men would have this Thought at  
M 4 Heart,



*The Blessings of*

Heart, and believe that there is nothing will raise the Spirits so much in an evil Day, or enlarge their hopes to be restored sooner, as thus being conscious to themselves, that they have shewn much Tenderness to others. The worst that can befall any merciful Man is, to think that he lives in an ungrateful World, and however his Services be repaid here, he is sure of an ample Reward hereafter. Now if this Evenness and Steadiness of Mind do not forsake a Man, when he meets with ungrateful Usage in the World, it is because he knoweth he is unjustly dealt with; and if he hath this Consciousness within him, it must arise from some good Acts of Charity and Mercy done by him to others. So that this Disposition makes us easy, let what will happen, and therefore is not only a Blessing to those who find immediate Relief by our Means, but is also a Comfort and real Blessing to our selves, to the Doer as well as the Sufferer.

But you say this Disposition is a real Blessing to our selves for another Reason, because, *Secondly*, Shewing Mercy to the Indigent, brings us to a near Resemblance of God. How does that appear?

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P. By the Evangelist St. *Luke*, our Savior is represented preaching this Doctrine to his Disciples in these Words, *Be ye C. 6. 36.*  
*merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful.* By which he makes himself the Pattern, for us to imitate in exercising this Duty. Mercy is the Favorite Attribute of God, recommended to us on all Occasions, to make our Actions correspond with his; for we can in nothing come so near and resemble him as in this. In Knowledge and Power, and other Perfections resulting from these Attributes, we can be said to go but a short way; but in Mercy and shewing Pity to the Poor, it is possible to go a great length. We have little more to do, but to subdue our Affections to the World and the Flesh, and to work up our Wills to the Love of one another, even as Christ for our sakes loved us. And when the Will is thus wrought up to a kind and merciful Disposition, altho' we cannot be in a Capacity of distributing to the Necessities of the Indigent at all times who want Relief, yet providing first for our selves, and all who are nearly dependent on us, we may never the less have the Will to help others, as far as our Circumstances will permit; and by being thus universal in our Charity, we are certainly in some Resemblance with

with God. For when Acts of Charity and Mercy are as general as may be, and we are deficient for want of Power only, not Inclination, the Will and Affection to this Christian Virtue becomes as god-like, as our Nature will permit; and the Poor and Rich are equal in this respect, and their Charity equally accepted.

*D.* So then it appears that tho' we cannot prescribe the Measure, with any Certainty to suit with every one's Circumstances, yet we may the manner, of shewing Mercy and Charity to others. Those who do all they can that way with Reason and Justice, are certainly perfect and godlike in their Disposition, and come as near the Resemblance of God as he expects; for our Good-will not being circumscribed within any Bounds, tho' our Power may, we are truly said to be in our Affections like him.

But doth not this Good-will to Mankind in general, resemble in a particular manner the special Favor of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?

*P.* Most certainly it doth. For the first thing that moved him, was his tender Compassion at the Miseries and Sufferings of Mankind, and the Consequence thereof was the Redemption of us by his own precious Death, that he might be  
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the Savior of the World. So our Goodwill, when it hath no less than the Miseries of all Mankind as its Object, being of a diffusive Nature, to extend as far as human Miseries reach, and come within our Knowledge, is always disposed to act a godlike Part, as a Savior to the World, in all such Instances which require our merciful Compassion and Assistance; not only in applying particular Acts of Mercy, as our Abilities answer for the Relief of the Bodies, but also of the Souls of the Poor and Indigent; whether it be in comforting or sympathizing with the Sorrows of a dejected and broken Spirit, or in Meekness bearing with the Mistakes, and putting a candid and favorable Construction, on the Judgment and Opinion of our ignorant and deluded Brethren, kindly instructing and admonishing them that they may recover themselves, at least in Bowels of Mercy and Compassion, not ceasing to pray for them; in all these Instances exercising perfect Charity to the Souls of Men, because these Souls are nearly related to God: And surely if they may be any way saved by our means, are we not doing a godlike Act, and copying after our Savior Jesus Christ?

*D.* No doubt St. James saith, *If any* C. 5. 19.  
*one do err from the Truth, and one con-* 20.  
*vert*

## The Blessings of

*vert him, let him know, that he that converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins;* and surely all pious Instructions and Admonitions are Acts of great Mercy to the Soul. But the Good-will of the Merciful must not rest here, it must go farther still.

*P.* Yes, in resembling Christ it must extend to the Bodies of the Poor, whom God feeds and satisfieth with Bread without Distinction, heareth and delivereth in time of Trouble; in time of Sickneſs and Want they are ſpecial Objects to be conſidered by us, either in adminiſtring to them as Phyſicians, viſiting as Friends, and comforting with Food and Raiment and other Neceſſaries of Life.

*D.* But are not the Bodies of Men to be treated with ſome regard to Mercy, even in Offenders againſt Law, when Punishment generally is to take place?

*P.* The true Ends of Punishment inflicted on Offenders are, either for Reformation or Example, or both. For ſmaller and trifling Offences the End may be obtained by Admonition, or ſome mild and gentle Methods, and therefore the Rigor of Punishment may well be ſpared, if there be no Obſtinacy in the Caſe. But even

even for all Offences of what nature soever where Punishment is to ensue, great Care ought to be had, not to go to the utmost Extremity of Law in all Cases, lest that tend towards Cruelty instead of Justice, especially when there is nothing desperate to be feared, and the Publick suffers but little by such Indulgence. This is not only to walk in the Path of God's Commandments, but to tread in the very Footsteps of Christ himself, who had such Compassion on the Woman brought before him for Adultery, and criminal by the Law, that foreseeing either her Repentance, or for some other merciful Consideration, he thought fit at that time to pronounce her Sentence in these Words; *he that is without Sin let him cast the first Stone at her.*

D. The great Tenderness and Compassion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ did appear in all his Actions: he came down from Heaven to this World in its poor and perishable Estate; both the Souls and Bodies of Men were relieved by him, and he taught and instructed them by his own Example; for he desired them to learn of him to find rest to their Souls. These were his first Care, for them it was that he parted from the Bosom of his Father, became incarnate and made like un-  
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to us, that we might be like him. *In this was manifested his Love to us; and*  
 C. 4. 12, *if he so loved us we ought also to love*  
 13. *one another, for hereby is it that his Love is perfected in us, saith St. John. And hereby we know that we dwell in him and he in us, by thus loving our Brethren.* But he did not only express his Love to our Souls, whilst he remained amongst us on Earth, but he shewed, for an Example to us to do the like, the same to our Bodies. For besides instructing, preaching and admonishing, what else was his whole Demeanor, but to relieve the miserable in Life and Limb. Feeding the Hungry, curing the Deaf, Dumb, Lame and Blind wherever he met them; nay even raising up sometimes dead Bodies to Life. For he went about continually doing good all manner of ways, in the most munificent and compassionate Expressions of Benevolence and Charity. And because we feel in our selves at the bare Prospect of a miserable Object, a certain Commotion of the human structure often, to a great degree of Sorrow out of mere Tenderness of Nature; that we might not imagine this to be a human Frailty and Weakness, which ought to be resisted and wholly expunged; and that this might not any way discourage us in  
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our Love of Mercy, he shews us by his own Example, that this is but a natural Expression of a good and tender Mind; for we find he himself did not refrain weeping, at the Lamentation of *Mary* for her Brother *Lazarus*, tho' he could not but know what himself would do, in raising him up from the Grave. Nay the very prospect and foresight of Misery and Desolation to come, had so great an Influence on his tender Mind, that even in prophesying of *Jerusalem*, St. *Luke* says, *when he came near the City he be-* C. 19. 41;  
*held it and wept over it, saying, If thou* 42.  
*hadst known, even thou, at least in this*  
*thy day, the things which belong unto*  
*thy Peace! But now they are hid from*  
*thine Eyes.* And in another Place, he spoke in this manner. O *Jerusalem, Je-* C. 13. 34;  
*rusalem, which killest the Prophets, and*  
*stonest them who are sent unto thee: how*  
*often would I have gathered thy Chil-*  
*dren together, as a Hen doth her Brood*  
*under her Wings, and ye would not!*

By all which pathetick and merciful Expressions it is manifest, that great Tenderness and Compassion of Nature was in his structure of Body and Mind, and that we having like Faculties, if we have the same merciful Spirit, must express our Tenderness and Affection to others, on proper

per Occasions in like manner. For this is a sure Sign of a good and godlike Disposition, and that in nothing we resemble God more, than in this merciful Temper. 'Tis putting our selves into a sort of Partnership with God; trafficking and lending unto the Lord. If we have Pity upon the Poor, we make our selves God's Followers, and his own Instruments to do that by Proxy in his stead, which he commands and delights in. For in his Name it is that the Poor begs, and for his Sake that we lend him Succors: and such a Sense of our Bounty and Charity shewn upon these Occasions, he has promised to place to his own Account, and to receive as an Obligation done to his own Person; as if we had merited thereby to obtain Credit with him, to be acknowledg'd his Children, and to represent him on Earth to the Poor and Nedy.

But you say this beneficent and merciful Disposition is not only for the Good and Benefit of others, but also a real Blessing to our selves, for a *third* Reason; because it hath the Promise of future Blessings in the Life to come, if it fails us in this. How do you make this appear?

P. The Text is not particular, as to the place where to expect a Blessing, but  
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 general



general in the Expression; but we may conclude it will answer fully as to the Life to come. In temporal Respects there is supposed to be so much Gratitude in the Mind of Man by Nature, that it is a Maxim pretty generally received in this World, that the merciful will obtain Mercy; yet it is not certain from human Laws, that this will be always the Case. Because in this respect there are no fix'd and unalterable Rules, and Measures amongst Men to walk by, all is voluntary; and common Justice is all, that the best Government will pretend to maintain by force of Law. Besides there is often so much unsteadiness even in the Execution of good Laws, that tho' there be no where any publick Profession or Pretence, of acting otherwise than according to this merciful Spirit, but always the contrary; yet what from Malice and Envy and other bad Qualities, and what from selfish Customs and Notions too much encouraged amongst Men, there is not always that mutual Service done to one another in this World, as the Equity of Things deserves. Benefits and Acts of Mercy are often misplaced, sometimes forgotten; and Men are not always disposed to do as they would be done by. Some are avaricious, some cruel in their Temper; and there-

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fore hardly to be drawn to acts of Charity and Mercy. Others indolent and careles, and so themselves be well, do not easily see the Distresses of their poor Brethren. Look no where but at home, and regard not how any thing passes in the World abroad. From these Principles of worldly Interest and Self-love they hold a Veil before their Eyes, to hide the Afflictions and Indigency of others from their Notice. *They Judge not the Fatherless, neither doth the cause of the Widow come unto them.* They love Gifts and seek after Rewards, but do not at all remember the poor Man. According to the Words of the Prophet *Isaiah*. So that the Portion of Mercy in this World is distributed, not with any great Heart to the Duty, neither with any Certainty or any Equity in many Cases, for time and chance happen to all men; and tho' it be generally true, that the merciful shall obtain Mercy amongst Men, yet there is no depending upon it. But in the World to come nothing is more sure or certain, for Christ, who is Truth it self, hath promised us this Blessing; nay he hath told us that it is the great Characteristick, by which he will distinguish his Followers when he cometh in his Kingdom. *When the Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and*

Isa. 1. 23.

Mat. 25.  
34. &c.

*and all the holy Angels with him, he shall say to those on his right Hand, come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation of the World. For I was an hungry and ye gave me Meat; I was thirsty and ye gave me Drink; and so on: Verily, I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

D. You see therefore that Mercy and Charity have the Stamp of God, for a free Passage to the Throne of Glory, and thro' the Gates of everlasting Happiness. By this it is that we have Confidence to address him for any Blessing we want; for if we give not to those who stand in need, how can we ask of God for ourselves, or expect any Favor at his Hands. We have nothing of our own but what we borrow from him, and therefore ought to lay it out according to his Will, and for his Honor. Even our Health and Understanding are lent us, as well as Riches, both to minister to others and our selves; and if we make a good use of those Talents committed to us, he will certainly reward us for it, and say, *well done good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* But if we lap up



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our Talent in a Napkin, and do no good with it, with either our Health, Wealth or Understanding, or other good Talents which God hath lent us, we shall have much to answer for, and can never with any face appear in our Lord's Presence. Weak and helpless as we be, yet none of us are without some Talents to make use of for the Benefit of others: and can we better dispose of them than in that way, which will turn to so great account to us? The Rich can no more want the Poor, than these the Rich, for mutual Support of Life and Maintenance; and the Strength and Labor of the one is as necessary to the well-being of all, as the Purse of the other; and if the one should draw back his hand from Work and Labor when he is able and healthy, he would certainly misuse his Talent as much, as if he dug a hole in the Earth to hide it in: for he would very much distress the Rich who is always supposed to stand in need of the poor Man's Labor. So that by Rich and Poor, a merciful Disposition is to be encouraged, in order to obtain Mercy from God; for each is in some Capacity or other capable of being useful, if not necessary, and without mutual Assistance there must be great Distress on both sides. Would the Rich therefore hope to be rewarded with

with Mercy from God, they must shew it first in their own Temper, by Benevolence to others; and so must the Poor also in their Sphere. They must not, altho' they stand on equal Terms before God with the Rich, grudge their Pains and Labor to serve them, not only because they are paid for their Service, but also upon a good and charitable Account, because the Rich are under Distress, if the Poor should refuse and deny to put their Hands to laborious Offices in their Service. Mutual Help is certainly a Duty in both, and the different Circumstances make no Difference in the Will of either to purchase God's Favor, which they are sure to obtain indifferently and equally, if they have but the same Disposition to Charity and Mercy. There seems not to be indeed so much Temptation in this respect to fail in the one as in the other; but however that be, it is surely hard to determine, whether there are not as many Instances to be found, of a cruel and merciless Temper amongst the Poor as amongst the Rich, let that proceed from whence it will.

It hath now been shewed, that a tender and compassionate Distribution of Favor and Mercy to others, is not more a Blessing to them than to our selves. *First*

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because

because it affords us present Complacency of Mind, and is attended always with the Blessings of the Indigent. *Secondly*, because it brings us to a near Resemblance of God. And *Thirdly*, because it hath the Promise of Blessing in the Life to come, if it fails us in this. I would now hear what proper Application you are able to make of this Doctrine, to answer the Necessities of the Poor in times of Scarcity and Want especially, and at all other Seasons for the common Benefit.

*P.* I would be glad it were possible to make a general Rule, to enforce the Duty of Alms-giving, which is necessary at all times, but especially in hard and scarce Seasons. But as we only know our own particular Abilities, and little with any truth of other Men's, so we can only lay down a general Rule for our selves, to dispose of such a certain Measure of Charity, as answers the particular times of common Distress, with regard always to our own Circumstances. This being therefore a Thing to be left to every one's own Breast to judge of, I know not what general Rule can be offered to others.

*D.* 'Tis certain that, as to the Duty of Alms-giving, no general Rule can be laid down, to answer all or different Men in their various and different Circumstances;



ces ; and therefore, as to any certain measure of Charity, we cannot prescribe to suit or square with such, whose Circumstances we are not thoroughly acquainted with, and that is with the generality of Men of all Conditions of Life ; as well those who have common Intercourse with us, as those at greater distance ; for there is nothing which the generality of Men affect more to disguise, or are so fond to hide and conceal from the World, as their true Circumstances ; so that we must not pretend to make a general Calculation, to know how much, or how little, is fitting for this or that Man to dispose of in Alms to the Poor. In this Duty 'tis impossible to lay down any general Rule for the measure of our Charity. But then 'tis certain also that if we have any Sense of God and Religion, every Man ought to lay down some Rule to himself, to order and guide him in his own Distributions, and he ought to advance as much in the measure of them upon extraordinary Occasions, as the Necessity of the times doth require, and in proportion to his own Ability and present Circumstances. For the Motive to shewing Mercy being one and the same with all true Christians, that is, out of pure Love to God, in Obedience to his Command and Example, that

Principle of Action must lead every one to some general Rule, for himself to order his Charity by; whether he be a *Nathaniel*, or *Publican*, or good *Samaritan*. So that they who dispose of their Charity without some general Rule of this Nature, do it not with Discretion, nor perhaps in that Measure, which they seem to lay down to themselves. And therefore thus far we may go, without Offence, to call upon all Men to acquaint themselves with their own Condition, and examine what share or part of their Substance they can spare to charitable Uses, without distressing themselves or their necessary Dependants, Relations and Friends, Children and Family. This Portion whatever it be, they ought to place to account as a Debt, which they must punctually answer for, as long as they remain in the same Circumstances. This is the only general way we have of prescribing to others any measure of Charity, which after all is left to the private Judgment of every Man. We can only urge the Duty in general, to concern greatly the Salvation of every particular Soul, and mark the Times and Seasons, that more particularly call for and demand a larger measure of Charity.

But

But that there may be some Discretion used, and order kept in charitable Distributions, that we may not foolishly and blindly bestow our Gifts, I believe, you may be able to point at some proper Methods to be observed, in order to answer more effectually and regularly the Wants and Necessities of the Poor.

*P.* To be sure there are some Rules that may be of Service, to be observed in times of Scarcity and Dearth of Bread, for the right and more beneficial ordering of our Charity. The first I remember, you made mention of was, for every one to watch and look into the Necessities of his own Family first, those of his own House and Blood, and next to that, those of his particular Neighborhood and Acquaintance. For there is a common saying, Charity begins at home. Here to be sure you are able to judge, who amongst them are really and truly in want, and need your Charity. There are always sturdy Beggars enough at our Doors, who often get by their Importunity that Portion of Charity, which some want to bestow upon their more indigent Neighbors.

*D.* To look at home first for those who stand in need, and have a greater right to require Charity at our Hands, is discreet and good Management. How happy would it



it be, if Men were intent to do thus much! The Poverty and Want of many a poor Family would be discovered in time, and Methods sought out to relieve them, before they came to Extremities. Here Men could have no Scruples of misplacing their Charity, when they are acquainted with the true Condition of those they relieve. Then, whatsoever they have more to spare for Charity elsewhere, they will give freely, that God may love and bless them for it. Proceed to another Rule?

*P.* Confine not your Charity always in hard and dear Seasons, to a Distribution only of Money or Victuals, for there are other ways to assist a poor Neighbor, often much more for the Benefit of himself and his Family. Those, who have nought to give either in Bread or Money, may for all that at certain times charitably relieve the Poor, with their own proper Labor upon Occasion. This sometimes is the best Distribution of Charity, which you are able to make to many distressed Families, and may afford more Help, by one day bestowed or lent at a critical Juncture of time, than by the Value of ten Days labor given at another. For the Poor are always much poorer, for want of Hands to go on with a piece of Work, in their ordinary Craft and Trade  
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at a convenient Season, or to plough and sow and plant, in order to make early Provision for future times by proper Industry: and a Hand extraordinary in the throng of Work is a very seasonable Act of Charity, to multiply and increase the poor Man's Stock, with very little or no Loss to your self.

D. To help the Poor by encouraging them in Industry, is making the Publick rich at small Expence; on the contrary, the leaning hard upon the poor, in any Article that distresses them in their Craft or Profession, is a publick Loss, and the cruellest Oppression. I cannot therefore but take notice of the want of Mercy and Charity in some Land-lords, who exact and covenant for Duties of Labor by the Year from their Tenants, and are nothing slack, to call for the poor Man's Horse and himself, at a very unseasonable time, when his own little Harvest wants present Attendance of both, and all the charitable help he can possibly get besides. 'Tis impossible to shew any Country in flourishing Condition, where there is to this Purpose a common Clause in Leases, either Land-lords or Tenants generally in a thriving Way: but the Common Sort, who are they that do the laborious part to be sure, must be always very poor and very slaves.

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*P.* I therefore have a Rule to offer to the rich in a dear and hard Season, and that is to keep the poor always in constant Labor for Wages. For there is a sort of Poor amongst us, and God knows how many they be in this poor Kingdom! who want their daily Food, if they have not a Day's Labor for Hire. What Charity must it be to keep such in Employment constantly! to preserve the needy perhaps from seeking unlawful Ways and Means for Bread. A Charity both to Soul and Body. A publick and private Benefit, purchaseth a Blessing from God, upon the common and ordinary Rules of Traffick between Man and Man. Money or Goods perhaps for the Worth thereof in Labor, and God's Blessings to boot, is sure a good Bargain.

*D.* This is one of the best Arguments can be of a good Neighbor, good Friend, and good Patriot, to prove his brotherly and Christian and Publick Spirit, by this discreet way of extending his Charity. Look out and find a Man of this kind, and then see if he have not the good Word and Hearts of all his Neighbors and Country Men; nay observe, if he hath not Blessings flowing in upon him, on the right hand and on the left. For this is not only to relieve but to enrich a Country;  
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to provide such means to strengthen Industry, that a Man's right Hand may not forget its cunning.

There are many other good Rules of like Nature, which I shall not be particular with you about; because, from what is already hinted, a Man may easily discover and suit them to his own particular Circumstances, to answer the true Ends of Charity in such Seasons. But this we must all of us bear in Mind, to stir us up to this Duty; namely, that there neither is nor can be, any State of Life exempted from bearing a part in shewing Mercy some way or other, nor no one's Circumstances so poor and mean, but he hath some Abilities to answer this Duty; and that if he expects to obtain Mercy himself, he must first shew the same by his own Carriage towards others, by being merciful, that he may obtain Mercy. For Mercy and Charity are Debts due to the Publick, and those ought to be first paid, and the Payment is welcome at all times; and a Man is never safe or easy whilst his Debts are unpaid. So long as Men look upon it in this Light, they will need no other Admonition to this Duty, than the frequent Objects of Compassion, which they meet with daily; and the Frequency of the Thing makes it perhaps  
less

less moving. But then we ought to consider, that as the Light of the Sun is not either less glorious or less useful, because it is always shining upon us, but rather for that very reason ought to be in higher Esteem; so since Mercy is a Christian Grace, the Frequency of the Objects before our Eyes, who demand and require our Compassion, must make the Obligation greater and stronger upon us, not to fail and be remiss in that Duty.

But is not the increase of Luxury in this Age a great Obstacle to Charity?

*P.* No doubt it is; for that which makes us poor, makes us less able to be beneficent and charitable, and Luxury is the sure Parent of Poverty in every State and Condition. It doth not only impoverish the Rich, but also the most part of all those, who are dependant on them. For Luxury is never bred in a Corner; Men are proud of shewing it in publick; and it is a Vice of such a contagious Nature, that it always infects more or less every place where it meets with the least Reception.

*D.* It is a great mistake to think that any sort of Extravagance, either in Dress, in Equipage, in Buildings, or other costly  
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and profuse Ways of spending Money, can be of Use or Advantage to a Nation. It may indeed be so to a few Craftsmen and Traders for a Time, yet in the end the publick must be a Sufferer. For Luxury is a profess'd and open Enemy to Works of Mercy and Charity, squandering away all that Portion which is above necessary Expence, to which the Poor have an undoubted Right and christian Title. Nay it puts a Man out of a Capacity to do many a good Action, which would otherwise suit well with his own generous Temper and Disposition. It is monstrous to think, that so much is daily spent on Players, Fiddlers and Songsters, that there is often not a Piece left for the Poor's Box : If we had but any Sense of Charity, we should allow the Poor sure at least one Share with the Dregs of the People. It is observable, that when the Spirit of Luxury hath once got a head, it soon swallows up all other Relations but Debtor and Creditor : Parents forget their Children, Masters their Servants, Husbands their Wives, Wives their Husbands : No wonder then the poor and distressed should find but few to own them, when every one regards no one but himself, lays out all he hath upon himself, eats and drinks to please himself, and cares not at whose Expence.

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This hurts the Poor full as much as the contrary Spirit of Avarice, for he who thinks all he can get little enough for himself to spend, will, I doubt, be as averse to bestow any thing in Charity as the veriest Miser.



CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

P. **T**HE next, upon whom our Savior pronounceth a Blessing, are the pure in Heart.

*Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God.*

D. To know and see God, it is necessary to become Godlike. The learned Heathens by the light of Nature had so much Knowledge in Divinity, to know it to be a Truth clear and undoubted, that as the Sun could not be seen without it's own Light, so God could not be known without his own Illuminations. They knew well that a Preparation of Soul was necessary to receive such Knowledge, and that such Preparation must be its Purification. How near this comes to that Christian Knowledge we have by the Gospel, our Savior shews, in that he declares Purity of Heart to be a necessary Preparation to the seeing of God. The Christian Philosophy in this Point of seeing God, depends on the Revelations he hath given us in the Gospel; the heathen Philosophy, upon the Revelations made of  
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himself in the Works of Creation and Providence; the one on the Knowledge of his Government of the visible World that now is, the other of the invisible World that is to come. Those, who in the Book of Nature look to see God, will find a large Volume, wherein much is describ'd of his Wildom and Power, but yet in so dark and obscure a manner, that if they have not recourse also to the Book of the Gospel they will hardly find the Way, which leads to eternal Happiness. Upon the Foundation of Reason and Learning, by much prying into the Nature of divine and spiritual Things, Men of Sagacity may find out something of their own laps'd Condition; that their Souls are here in the Body kept as it were in Prison; that there is a Necessity of some Purgation of the Mind, in order to conceive things which have no Dependance on our Senses, and yet affect the Soul; and from the unalterable Nature of Good and Evil in the World, the Obstruction of the one, and Tendency of the other to our Felicity, that it is possible to form a general Knowledge, of what is or is not according to God's Will, in order to regulate and conduct our Actions, in a way agreeable to the divine Nature: but to see God in such a manner as to enjoy



enjoy him, to have an Assurance of the Remission of Sins, to know upon what Grounds we are entitled to God's Grace and Favor, and the Blessings of eternal Rewards, had been impossible, had not God himself declared the Mystery of Man's Redemption. *Plato* truly placed Felicity in God himself, to partake of which he supposed we could not, but by the Exercise of Virtue to purify and cleanse the Mind, and prepare it for Friendship and Communion with God, and in order to this there was much need of Learning and Study in speculative Points, to fit it for such high Contemplations: This he illustrates by shewing that the more absent from the Body we are, the more fit for intellectual Operations, as if it were in us to enlarge our Capacity so, as to arrive at some Perfection of seeing and knowing God in his divine Nature and Essence; but how this Union or Communion with God was to be wrought, he was as far to seek as the most ignorant Heathen of them all. That we should be made capable of seeing him, who is infinite in his Nature, was a sort of Philosophy, the wisest of the Antients had no Notions of; or to be so joined to him in Love, as the Object and ultimate End of our Felicity, they could

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not comprehend in any satisfactory manner. Therefore some placed the end of Happiness in the Possession of Pleasures, and if this Enjoyment were sufficient to make the human Mind acquiesce in it, be perfectly tranquil, easy and contented; perhaps they were not much out in their Conjectures: Others placed it in the Exercise of Virtue and virtuous Actions, by which they acquired a certain Rectitude of Mind, which would be sufficient to make them happy; others besides this would not be contented with less than the Addition of Goods of Fortune, as Health, Riches, &c. together with a total Freedom from Pain and Grief to compleat Happiness, by which they might obtain a Rectitude of Mind and Body both, and from thence they concluded that Happiness must assuredly follow. But that Happiness, which is the ultimate and chief Good we can enjoy, than which nothing more is to be or can be desired, doth not consist in any one or other or all of these together, nor can there be in this Life any state of perfect Happiness. For Virtue it self with all its Concomitants in goods of Fortune, with Rectitude of Mind and Body both, is but the means, not the end of Happiness. Where our Appetites end, are filled and  
satisfied

satisfied for ever, there is the Seat of true Felicity, and which can therefore be no where else, but in such a state where we shall be able to see God and enjoy him. The Nature of true Happiness, and where to fix it, we find, puzzled all the Philosophers to tell, until we found it in the Revelation of Christ Jesus. This is true Philosophy according to our Savior, *to John. 17. know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* And therefore Christianity tho' it promulgeth no new Law, to overturn natural and moral Institutions, yet it is a perfect and full Explanation and Illustration both of the one and the other; it gives the most faithful and true Representation of the State and Condition of the Soul; points out the only Way of doing the Will of God and enjoying his Favor; not in a doubtful and imperfect, but in a clear and plain Manner, in Precepts and Expressions positive and powerful, both convincing and perswasive, full of Threats and Promises. Men must be blind indeed if they will argue now and debate about the Nature of true and eternal Happiness; if they cannot meet with it in this Life, their Desires need not be frustrate, for they know where it is to be had in another. The way to obtain it is open



to them, and they have nothing more to do but to follow the Directions of the Gospel, and prepare their Hearts to see God, and in seeing to enjoy him.

But do you shew me what Observations you draw from this Promise of our Savior? *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God.*

P. There are two Things which readily occur to our Observation.

*First*, Whatever acceptable Service we would offer to God must proceed from the Heart.

*Second*, That to see God in the Purity of the Heart is an undoubted Blessing.

As to the *First*, Whatever acceptable Service we would offer to God must proceed from the Heart. This is evident.

*First*, Because to serve God in the Purity of our Hearts, is to serve him in such a manner as he requires in his Gospel.

*Secondly*, 'Tis to serve him in such a manner as is most agreeable to the divine Nature.

*Thirdly*, 'Tis to serve him in such a manner as is answerable to the Obligations of Sincerity and Truth.

*D. First*, Then shew me that to serve God in the Purity of our Hearts, is to offer him such Service as must be acceptable to him, because it is to serve him in such a Manner as he requires in his Gospel.

*P.* The *Jewish* Worship, which was far short of the Christian for Purity, pretended to no less than to serve God with Integrity of Mind and Heart, for the Precept ran in this manner. *What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to serve him with all thy Heart and with all thy Soul.* But the Gospel is full and expresse to this Purpose, where we are bid to pray with the Heart, to believe with the Heart, to treasure up holy things in the Heart; and when the poor Widow cast her two Mites into the Treasury, Christ himself, magnifieth her Generosity, in regard that what she offered was from the Heart, for she cast in all she had. And St. Paul saith, *if there be first a willing Mind, it is accepted according to that a Man hath, and not according to that he hath not.* So that in some Cases when we are not able to pay God that Service, in Acts of Charity, and the like, which we wish to pay him, he will nevertheless accept such as

Deut. 10;  
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2 Cor. 8;  
12.

1 John. 3.  
21.

it is, *if our Heart condemn us not*, for then saith the Apostle, *we have confidence towards God*. All holy Worship therefore seems to center in the Heart, as the Fountain from whence flow all Things, which the Gospel maketh any Account of, as belonging to God, or to that Service we are bound to pay him. The outward Ordinances of Worship are but mere Dress and Fashion, when compared with Faith unfeigned, a pure Heart, and a good Conscience. Cleanse but the Heart and it is an easie matter to have clean Hands; to wash them in Innocency, and appear before him under Gospel Discipline, in that manner which is most pleasing to him.

*D.* No doubt the Simplicity of the Gospel requires pure and unmix'd Service, to make it acceptable to God, if there be the least Shadow of Hypocrisy, Coldness or Indifference in it, all is Abomination. Our very Prayers become Sin to us, when we come with Hearts unprepared to such holy Exercises. For it is possible to draw near to God with our Mouths and honor him with our Lips, when our Hearts are far from him. But vain is such Worship, when our Savior saith, *out of the Heart proceed evil Thoughts*, and a long train  
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Mat. 15.  
19.



of other Impurities, and these are they which defile a Man, and not to eat with unwashen Hands, or to slip some Ceremonies of Worship by Mistake or casual accident, defileth not a Man. 'Tis not a multitude of Prayers or other acts of Devotion which sanctify our Hearts, but the Innocence and Purity of our Hearts which sanctify our Devotions. For God has more respect to moral Duties strictly executed with Integrity, than to all outward Ordinances whatsoever, nay even of his own Institution, without due Preparation of the Heart, and would sooner forgive the neglect of divine Offices, than the least want of those moral Virtues, which are required by Nature, and serve to purify a Man's Heart. For it is the Commandment of our Savior himself to be gone from the Altar, and leave our Gift there, till we first reconcile our selves to our offended Brother. So that if this be conceived to have Reference to the Oblations to be made at the Lord's Supper, as many of our good Divines and Commentators do suppose, then are we forbid to communicate, till our Hearts are prepared to forgive Offences, and to make restitution to others for Offences received at our Hands. So that the most solemn Institutions of God in divine Worship seem to lose

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lose all their Holiness, when they are not accompanied with a pure and holy Heart. These are but outward Expressions for the sake of godly Fellowship and Communion, for publick Order and Decency in God's Church: but true Religion is a Tree of Life, will bear Fruit as well as Blossoms, or else its Bloom and Verdure in outward Appearance will be of no more Use, than the Fig-tree in the Gospel which our Savior cursed. Neither are the Ends of Religion always best served, by the outward flourishing Estate of the Church upon Earth, but by Integrity of Mind and Manners; for then Popery might ride triumphant, and pretend to a greater Degree of Favor at God's Hand, than any Christian national Church in the World, and we must embrace a new politick Light in this modern abuse of Christ's Church, and exchange the Kingdom of Christ for the Kingdom of this World, expressly against his Commandment. And therefore the Humility and Simplicity of true Christian Manners is to reform our Hearts, and to take them off from the World, that they may be free to serve God in a spiritual way; and so as we be not double minded, but cleanse our Hands and purify our Hearts, as St. James says, *we may draw nigh to God and he will draw*

C. 4. 8.

*draw nigh to us.* The outward Ceremonial, as it can make no Man's Faith perfect by any Efficacy of its own, so the want of it will keep no Man at distance from God, if he have a pure and undefiled Conscience; for his Addresses to him will then be always as he requires in his Gospel, and consequently his Worship will be accepted, because it proceeds from the Heart, whatever his Errors may be, as to outward Discipline in the Church. For if we do the best we can to purify our Minds, and yet cannot comprehend the Weight and Necessity of human Ordinances so, as to reconcile our Practice to them without Sin, God forbid that any Christian Church upon Earth should enjoin Conformity to them, as an Article of Faith against *St. Paul's* own Rule to the *Galatians*, who bids us stand fast in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free: altho' we may well conclude and suppose, that there may be an erroneous Conscience in some Cases, and yet that very Conscience on that account not free from Sin. But if the Heart be no more purified than the Mind, and there be any mixture of Obstinacy with Error, it is vain and sinful to plead Conscience in such a Case: which thing I would have all our  
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Protestant Dissenters to weigh very well and consider, lest they deceive themselves.

Shew me now *Secondly*, that whatever acceptable Service we offer to God must proceed from the Heart for this Reason, because this is to serve him in such a manner, as is most agreeable to his divine Nature?

*P.* God is perfect and divine in his Nature, so that he can neither be said to want our Service, for any real Profit it can be to him; neither can that Service be acceptable, which hath accompanying it any mixture of Affections towards this World. It must be pure, tho' it be imperfect, and our Thoughts must correspond in Purity, in some measure, to the divine Nature of him to whom we address ourselves; that is, must be as divine and spiritual as we can make them. They must be chaste, because any thing of the Lusts of the Flesh or the Pride of Life to appear in them, is to shew certain Marks of the Impurity of the Heart; they must be direct and unmix'd, because a double minded Man is unstable in all his ways; they must be simple and uniform, because there is no need of Craft or Subtlety with God; they must be free and unconstrained, because he loveth Cheerfulness in his Service; and they must be steddy and resolute, to shew that our Obedience is rational,  
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and proceeds upon a Principle of Love. These are all Marks and Tokens of Purity of Heart, and of that Holiness, *without which no man shall see the Lord,* as <sup>Heb. 12.</sup> the Author to the *Hebrews* has it. <sup>14.</sup> The divine Nature doth not communicate his Excellencies to those, who serve him after any other manner, but in that which purifieth the Mind, and prepares it for divine Contemplations. *For the natural* <sup>1 Cor. 2.</sup> *Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God,* saith St. Paul, *neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* To serve God therefore without Purity of Heart would be as preposterous, as to look upon the Sun without Organs of Sight, we might perceive the Heat thereof but nothing of the Beauty of Light and Colours. So God may and doth put it into the Heart of every Man to fear and dread him, but he will accept no Service, nor can we with any reason offer it for his Acceptance, which hath any thing of a defiled Nature, or any Spot of the World in it. If we seek to serve him agreeably to his divine Nature, we must endeavor to be pure as he is pure, that we may be like him; for if we do not approve our selves by Purity, we are no Ministers or Servants of his, we do not serve him in Newness of Spirit, *we are*

Rom. 8. *are in the Flesh*, as St. Paul speaks, *and*  
 8. *cannot please him*. But if we *establissh*  
 1 Th. 3. *our Hearts unblamable in Holiness*, unto  
 13. *which we are called, cleansing our selves*  
 2 C. 7. 1. *from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, and  
 continue therein as becometh, we shall be  
 made Partakers of his Holiness, as saith  
 the same Apostle. So that Purity and  
 Holiness perfect and recommend our Ser-  
 vice, in shewing that we are willing to  
 do our Duty in such a manner, as is most  
 agreeable to his divine Nature.

D. The Nature of God is to be con-  
 ceived by us under the Notion of some  
 spiritual Being, which cannot but see in-  
 to the Thoughts and Hearts of Men, and  
 therefore all they that would offer him  
 any acceptable Service, must do it in some  
 spiritual manner, suitable to the spiritual  
 Perfection of their own Nature. All the  
 Addresses we make to God, the more  
 they carry in them of this spiritual Per-  
 fection, the more they answer that, which  
 ought to be the end of all our religious  
 Service, namely, to glorify God in that  
 manner, which corresponds best with his  
 divine Nature : and since a pure Heart is  
 the highest pitch of spiritual Perfection  
 we can arrive at, if we serve him there-  
 with, we do our best to spiritualize our  
 Nature, and God will therefore accept our  
 Service;



Service, when we offer it with all our Heart and with all our Soul. For bodily Exercise in religious Worship, tho' it hath the shew of Piety, profiteth but little, the Fervency of the Spirit doth all. There is something in the Heart that speaketh to God, where the Voice it self is not heard, as *Hanah* prayed before the Lord, and yet he heard her Prayer. The very Thoughts of the Heart are not hid from him, for he searcheth them by his Spirit, and he having revealed to us his hidden Wisdom, that we might know the things which he hath freely given us, he expecteth that we should compare spiritual things with spiritual, to make some Coherence in our Service to the divine Nature. Now God is of a Nature so pure and perfect, that he can communicate with nothing impure or defiled, nor spread the Influence of his divine Graces, but where there remain the Seeds of Piety and Virtue sown in the Heart : for tho' the Work of Regeneration and a new Mind be the Gift of God, yet the Will to do and perform such holy Duties, as are Fruits and blessed Consequences thereof, is of our own free Choice ; not from any incontrollable Impulse of the divine Spirit, which we might resist, and many daily do resist it ; but whenever we are  
guided

guided by it, our Understanding is called upon to exert it self, and all the Faculties of the Mind are enlivened thereby; so that by it indeed we are taught what is best and fittest to be done, but whether we will or will not follow it, is wholly in our own Breast. The Heart of Man therefore must assimilate it self, as much as may be, to the divine Nature, before any holy Act of Worship or Adoration can be offered, as pure Incense before God. For 'tis not the Modes and Circumstances of Worship, which he seeketh principally and chiefly, because, these being but outward Acts, they may be used in an ill manner; to serve a turn only and pass upon the World for Devotion, when there may be nothing but Hypocrisy at Bottom; but God who knoweth all the Recesses of the Heart and searcheth them out, will not accept of any Service, but what is pure and undefiled: less than this, will not bear any Conformity with his Divinity. For saith the  
 Jer. 7. 9. Prophet, *will ye rob, swear falsely, and burn Incense to Baal, and come and stand before me in my House?* In such Circumstances, *vain are all Oblations, and Incense is an Abomination.* And if in the Jewish Service, where were required so many outward Ceremonies, without which  
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the Law of *Moses* could in no good Manner be any way observed; if God had then no respect to their new Moons and Sabbaths, and hated even their solemn Meetings, as the same Prophet saith, *because their Hearts were unclean and their hands full of Blood*; how much more under the Law of the Gospel, where the outward Ceremonies are laid aside, for the purer Acts of Devotion proceeding from the Heart to succeed, must we Christians think God's Service to consist in such Worship, as best corresponds with the divine Nature, and that all our Prayers and Addresses to him after any religious manner, as the Ordinances of the best reformed Church upon Earth, will have but little Weight with him, who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, if we do not sanctify them with the Purity of our Hearts, and the inward Devotion of Spirit and Soul. To address God in this manner, as it is to answer the End and Design of the Gospel Institution, so it spiritualizes all our religious Services, by begetting in us a Love of holy Exercises, making what would be otherwise a Yoke and a Burden, to become our Joy and the Delight of our Hearts, and by increasing our Faith and Love towards God,

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doth effectually stablish our Hearts unblamable in Holiness.

How do you make it appear, that whatever acceptable Service you offer to God must proceed from the Heart, because, *Thirdly*, to serve God in the Purity of our Hearts, is to serve him in such a manner, as best answers the Obligations of Sincerity and Truth?

*P.* Nothing is true and sincere Service, but what is executed with intent to perform the Duty commanded; and a Man is never said to intend well what he hath not at Heart. If God imposed upon us such a Service, as must necessarily be performed whether we will or no, Slaves we should be and not Servants, guided by Necessity and not Choice in all we do. But the Obedience which Christ commands is voluntary on our part, we have it in our Power to do, or not to do, according to his Commandments. God treats us as rational Agents, what we will is our Act, and if it be agreeable to the Nature of the Duty, he accepts it, if not, he rejects it. To will therefore to serve him, and not with the Intention of the Heart to do it in Purity, is conceiving and uttering from the Heart Words of Falshood, it is as the Prophet speaks, *transgressing and lying against the Lord*; or as the wise Man has it,

If. 59. 13.

it, *like Clouds and Wind without Rain*; Pr.25. 14. makes a false Appearance, but refresheth not, there is no Truth in it; and therefore God cannot accept it for Service; we do not offer it in such a manner as to oblige him to it. On the contrary when the Heart goes along with the Service, he has bound himself to accept it, because however deficient it may be, it is true and sincere; for it is all that is expected that the Servant doth his best, with Singleness of Heart. That is the way to find favor from Men, altho' they cannot be assured of our Hearts; for *Solomon saith, he that loveth Pureness of Heart*, Pr.22. 11. *for the Grace of his Lips the King shall be his Friend*: and how much more God, who seeth and knoweth his Sincerity, and pondereth the Heart. If he finds the outward Service to correspond with inward Purity, as a kind and good Master he will receive us to Grace and Favor, as fully answering all our Obligations upon the score of Sincerity and Truth, because there can be no false Worship in us.

D. The Idolatry of the antient Heathens consisted in a strange Variety of false Worship, without any Purity of Heart, unless blind Bigotry may be called such, and consequently they lay under no Obligations to Sincerity and Truth in di-

vine Worship, to the false Deities of those times. If any thing therefore of false Worship remains now in any Address to the true God, in that respect Men seem to renounce all Obligations to Sincerity and Truth, as much as if they were worshipping a heathen Deity. And the Adoration of the Host in the Church of *Rome* has so near a Resemblance to heathen Idolatry, that no wonder it is a common Observation, that at this day the Change of Religion, between new and old *Rome*, is not very great or extraordinary; at least there can be no Sincerity or Truth in that Worship, which so plainly and evidently contradicts our Senses. Strange it is, that Men in this Age should so far mistake the Gospel, as to think there can be no true Faith, but what is built upon the Doctrines of their particular Church, which they falsely call Catholick, or Universal, tho' it be in plain Contradiction to their own natural Powers, or the utmost Evidence of Reason and Sense. As if to be sincere in the Service of God, were to renounce Truth, or that the Heart could not be pure, unless it will submit to be deceived: and under the Notion of Merit and good Works, to cancel all Obligations founded on the Grace of God and Faith. If Christ had told us that his Religion



ligion consisted in Proceffions, Prayers to Saints, and other Works of Supererogation in the Church of *Rome*, there had been no need of Purity of Heart or of Sincerity, to make divine Worship acceptable, since we might be able to do all that, without the least spiritual Motion. *Cicero's* Divinity, in the Days of old Paganism at *Rome*, was surely more holy and Christian-like, for he allowed that God had an intercourse with Men, so as to value only such Devotion as proceeded from the Heart, and now the present *Romanists* will have it, that God accepts our Prayers not by Weight, but Number. But against these new Notions of Religion, if we place the plain Doctrines of holy Scripture, which speak of Purity of Heart and Holiness, as the Fruits and Consequences of Truth and Sincerity in Religion, 'tis evident to a Demonstration, that nothing but such a Spirit of Purity, which enlivens us in our Christian Duties, can sanctify any Address to God in a religious manner, and that this Spirit can arise from nothing else, but the Obligations we lie under to act always with Sincerity and Truth. And this is the Reason that God doth not always hear our Prayers, because we fail either in Truth or Sincerity, and ask amiss. Which we may do several

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Ways.

Ways. *First*, when we pray for any thing improper for us; either as not good in it self, or not good for us, or not good for us at this time, and in the Circumstances we are in; or else tho' good for us, is against the general good of the Publick, or some way or other interferes with the ordinary good of God's Providence, which we are no way able to measure or comprehend. But be that as it will, the common and ordinary Reason in all these Cases is, because our Prayers are not offered with Sincerity and in Truth. Either we are provok'd by our Passions to seek for what we ought not, and so the Desires of the World or the Flesh creep in upon us, and we then seem to pray for what would be against our own sober Will and Understanding; or we mistake that for good which would be our Bane, and so we betray our Ignorance in asking; in both there is, either want of Truth or want of Sincerity, to deface the Purity of our Hearts. So that, whenever God thinks fit not to hear us, or answer our Prayers, it is most certainly because we thus ask amiss. If we act with Sincerity in addressing him, we must first sift our Hearts from every impure Affection to prepare us for it, and join our Purity and Sincerity together at such a time; and then

then to act with Truth, we must do it for such Ends and Purposes, as the thing supposes to aim at, that is for Good and not for Hurt, either as to our selves or others; nor yet for any private Good inconsistent with the Publick, nor with the ordinary course of God's Providence. So that those things the Nature of which we cannot understand, we ought not, without the utmost Submission to God's Will, to pray for, because that shews some Defect of Purity in the Heart. In every religious Exercise as well as Prayer, if we do not serve God in Purity of Heart, we cannot act up to the Obligations upon us. All mixture of Impurity and Defilement; accompanying divine Offices, shews something still of false Worship; on the other hand when there wants not Purity of Heart, tho' the Worship be not perfect, and the Frailty of our Nature appears manifest, yet being unprofitable Servants at the best, in submitting all to God, who pondereth the Heart, he will consider it to our Advantage, according to the Integrity thereof, and so long as our Heart stands fast and condemns us not, neither will God; we having Confidence in him, that he accepts our Service, not for our Works sake, but in that it proceedeth ac-

P 4 cording



according to the Strictness of Sincerity and Truth.

What is the Second Observation made from these Words? *Blessed are the Pure in Heart, for they shall see God.*

P. That to see God in the Purity of our Hearts is an undoubted Blessing.

D. To see God is an Expression to be well weighed and considered, before we can understand this Proposition before us. For in some respect to see God, as with the Eye of the Body, or even with the Eye of the Mind in such a manner, as to have a full and adequate Conception of him, is impossible. But for all this in a spiritual Sense, and with the Understanding also in this Life, in such a way as to form true and instructive Ideas of him by the Light of Nature and Grace, such as will lead us into the Knowledge of his Existence and divine Attributes, it is very possible to see God. But then this is, *as thro' a Glass darkly*, as the Apostle speaks, and not at all in an adequate manner. There is a great difference also in seeing him, according to the several Degrees of Perfection or Imperfection, in the various States of Mankind, in the State of the Regenerate and of the Sinner, and finally in our glorified State. Also there is a farther Difference, on Account of the Degrees

1 Cor. 13.  
12.

Degrees of Grace which God bestows, to enable some to see more of his Divinity than others can. How therefore do you understand what it is to see God, and be blessed in that beatifick Vision?

P. When there are so many various ways of seeing God, some in this and some in another Life, and that too, according to the several different States in which a Man may be considered: Since also God is in his own Nature a most perfect and amiable Being, and the Fountain of all Beauty and Perfection in his Creatures, as they depend upon him both for their Being and Well-being; and since to see God signifies, in the Sense of our Savior, to enjoy him, doubtless it must be the greatest of Blessings to those who are pure in Heart, who are regenerate, to see their great Creator and Benefactor even in this Life darkly; but in our glorified State, to see him in the most conspicuous Light, and to advance by degrees in the beatifick Vision, from the Light of Grace to the Light of Glory, is a Blessing of such an inconceivable Nature to us at present, that we can have no other Notions of it, but that it is to be in the highest Capacity blessed for ever. But as every one who is rightly disposed in his Heart and Affections to see God, cannot but see him

him in a true Light, with so much of his Perfections and Excellencies about him, as to inflame his Soul with the highest Transport, so when this heavenly Disposition is wanting, there are many Obstacles at hand to interrupt this blessed Vision, and assuredly succeeds as much Wretchedness in seeing God under such an evil State, as there is Blessedness in the others who see him in the Purity of their Hearts. For to look into the Fountain of Purity, we must first have our Minds purified, or else we shall be yet to seek for any Blessedness in it.

*D.* 'Tis obvious to our common Experience that if the Eye be out of order, infected either with bad Humors, or otherwise weakened and incumbered with outward Accidents, the brightest Objects do but the more vex and disable it from seeing: so also in the Understanding, there is alike required a pure Heart and Mind, to see and to conceive the divine Attributes and Perfections. We must cleanse us first from all Prejudice and Corruption of Mind and Affections, before we can look with any Pleasure into heavenly things. For if it were supposed, that we could see God with a load of Filth and Impurity about us, we should certainly be able to relish nothing of the divine Beauty and Perfection



Perfection of his Nature. All would appear to us strange and astonishing, and it may be dreadful rather than any way acceptable and entertaining. For in the Enjoyment of any thing, there must be a Conformity in the Affections to the Object; and since God's Nature is so very unlike the Impurity of Man's Heart, it must be impossible to think that less than godlike and divine Conceptions should raise any agreeable Images, from the Vision of so pure and perfect a Being. Therefore the Blessedness of seeing God must proceed, from the Innocence and Purity of the Heart, otherwise it will prove so far from a Blessing, that in a future State we must suppose it to be the utmost Dread and Confusion of the Sinner. For by this Measure of Purity in the Heart of Man it is, that one is said to see God and enjoy him, and another to see and not enjoy. For altho' to desire to see God be natural to the Creature, yet the adventitious Guilt of Sin defaces and eradicates that natural Desire, and 'tis only they who have their Faculties enlarged by the Light of Grace and Glory, that long with Impatience, trust and confide in the Hopes of seeing him; that is, to see him, not only as the Object of their Contemplation, but as a Pattern also for their Imitation in this Life.

*The Blessings of*

Life. For there is no greater Blessing to a regenerate Mind, than to become good and holy by imitating the Perfections of God, for the Perfection of the Christian Religion is placed in this Imitation. This is what the Gospel means by the new Man and the new Creature, by Purity of Heart to participate of the divine Nature, as in a new Birth in Christ, in order to resemble the Father in his divine Perfections. Whenever we want this holy Disposition, the Spirit of a Man fails and is out of order, and till he be renewed and set right in Holiness, he is like the troubled Sea, without Peace, without Rest; very unlike God and the divine Nature, which a pure Heart desireth to look into for Happiness. For Sin separates us from God and will not let us see him; and what we cannot see we cannot imitate; nay it even destroys that innate Desire of seeking Felicity in him. Whatever therefore reunites us to him, after we be separated, must certainly be a great Blessing; and since Purity of Heart puts a new Mind into us, placeth us again, by the Merits of our Savior, as it were in a State of Innocence, and disposeth us to see God, and in the Sight of him, to seek some Union and Participation of the divine Nature and Excellence, therefore to see God

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in Purity of Heart, is undoubtedly to enjoy him, and that Enjoyment must be the highest Blessing.

And thus are fully proved those two Propositions. *First*, that whatever acceptable Service we would offer to God must proceed from the Heart, and *Secondly*, that to see God in the Purity of the Heart is an undoubted Blessing. Therefore we may hence learn how necessary a thing it is, to keep the Heart with all Diligence, and to keep it in Purity, for when this is the Case with us, we need not fear but God will give us his Blessing. He will bless us in this Life with all spiritual good Things, encrease our Faith so as to see him in his Perfections and Attributes, as the Object of our Imitation and Love, and in the Life to come he will bless us with seeing him as he is in Glory. Which is such a State of Felicity as is above all our Conceptions at the present.

*P.* But since God is a Spirit, and represented to us in the Gospel as a Being most sublime, of a Nature hard for us to form or conceive just Notions or Apprehensions of with any Exactness or Propriety, doth it not therefore seem, that the Qualifications most necessary to enable us to see him, should consist in the Improve-



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Improvement of our Understanding, rather than in the Purity of our Heart?

*D.* What you suppose is, I confess, rational, in the way of human Conceptions of the Nature of Beings, such as we are acquainted with in this World. Our Learning and other Improvements in Knowledge here are Qualifications, which make Men wiser in seeing into the Works of the Creation, and more capable to judge of them, than the Purity of our Hearts can be supposed to do. For the more intricate and sublime the Nature of a Thing is, the more Wisdom and Knowledge we must have to form a true Notion of it. To be willing and desirous to conceive it with a pure Heart, will not always do, if we want either Parts or Understanding equal to the Reflection, and that Reflection comes within the Compass of human Understanding. But the Nature of God is not to be seen or looked into, as other sublunary Beings; we have neither Eyes to see, nor Minds to conceive him in any full adequate or compleat manner. We may as well pretend to see and distinguish Sounds by our Eyes, or argue on the Nature and Beauty of Colours without them, as define and demonstrate the Essence of the divine Nature, by the human Faculties of the Mind, or the  
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sensible Organs of the Body. The Heart of Man therefore, and not his Understanding, stands in the Place of the Organ of Sight in these divine Matters, it is the Instrument we must chiefly make use of to prepare us for seeing him, for the pure in Heart are as well instructed for enjoying the beatifick Vision, as the wisest Philosophers. God worketh in us more by Faith than by Reason in revealing himself to our View and disclosing the hidden Wisdom and Treasures of Knowledge, in the Mystery of our Redemption. *Not many Wise, saith St. Paul, are called.* <sup>1 Cor. 1. 26.</sup> So that the Calling of a Christian consists not at all in Wisdom, *for God hath chosen the foolish Things of this World to confound the wise;* and you seldom find Men so greatly mistaken in the Nature of divine Things, as your high Pretenders to Knowledge and Philosophy, who build their Religion wholly on the Power of Reason and not on Revelation. So that a pure Heart hath more divine Wisdom in it than all Philosophy. *Where is the wise? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Disputer of this World? Hath not God made foolish the Wisdom of this World?* saith the Apostle. These are Questions as proper now to be put to the Learned amongst us, as formerly to the *Corinthians.* <sup>1 Cor. 1. 20.</sup>

*Corinthians.* For if Men will not be content to trust in and depend upon Revelation, for the true Guide of divine Knowledge and Worship, they will be as ignorant as the weakest Christian in Things divine; their Reason will fail them, or be at a full stop, whenever they pretend to look into the mysterious Truths of the Gospel, or to see God in any other Manner than by the Heart.

However unphilosophical this way of arguing may seem, yet it is just and rational to every faithful Christian that is pure in Heart, who is conscious to himself, that his Capacity is unequal to the Sublimity of the divine Nature, and that he is not to measure spiritual Knowledge, by his own weak and imperfect Faculties; that there are such things as Mysteries in Religion, and yet God hath plainly delivered them as Truths to be embraced and believed, not to be disputed, however above, or even contrary to Reason, as some vain and conceited Minds falsely imagine, for since God cannot lie, we can no more doubt of them, than of Things demonstrable by our Reason. If we have all that Certainty which the Nature of the thing will bear, that the Holy Scriptures are truly set forth and represented, and contain nothing but what is the re-

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vealed Will of God to Mankind, we have as good and full Proof to acquiesce in them, as in any other Truth, of which we are apt to have no manner of Doubt at all, in other Matters depending on human Testimony, and why a divine Truth, which is not in its Nature demonstrable, should not be as readily credited, and received upon proper Evidence, as any other Truth, which hath nothing but the like Evidence to support it, I cannot imagine.

It is an odd kind of Philosophy that consists in nothing so much, as in doubting of the plainest and most obvious things, revealed as Truths in holy Scripture, because we cannot well reconcile them to our own way of thinking. Are we not to believe a thing for a Truth, and which the Generality of Mankind have no doubt about, because a plodding logical Head may demonstrate that it is possible the thing may be otherwise? this sceptical way of reasoning will scarcely distinguish a Fool from a Philosopher, and a Man at this rate must believe nothing; all his Learning and Study will prove a Curse instead of a Blessing; and he must suppose neither Eating, Sleeping or Exercise, to be wholesome or beneficial to Life, because he can demonstrate that possibly he may

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receivē Infection, in the Act of doing one or the other of these common Requisites for Health. That Man hath sure a sound Foundation to build his Faith upon, who hath a manifest Probability for his Assurance; for if the thing were demonstrable, then would there be no need for Faith at all; and because mysterious and divine Truths cannot be brought down so low, as to come under the Demonstration of human Reason, therefore Faith is to go hand in hand with it. Every good Christian will let Reason conduct him, in all things within the Compass of human Knowledge, but when any Mysterious Truth comes to be the Object of Religion, he will drop his Reason and give way to Faith. So that you see our Understanding must yield and give place to a pure Heart, whenever we undertake so divine a thing, as to see God, for if he himself do not cause some Transformation in the Mind, by the Blessing he hath promised to accompany this Grace of Purity in the Heart, it cannot be that the Improvements of human Knowledge should ever bring it about.

*P.* I plainly now discover the Deceit put upon us by our new Rationalists, who are still insisting upon our believing of nothing, which is not purely conformable

to Reason. For surely we know, we can have no better Warrant than God's Authority, and that we have the highest Reason to acquiesce in it; that Religion consists not only in acting up to our Reason, but to the Assurance of our Faith also; and therefore to see God, when Reason can give us but a feint View, we must lay it aside, and stick to other Illuminations, and by Faith in the Revelations of the Gospel seek to come at such a Knowledge, as God is pleased to give us of himself, whether it be conformable to Reason or above it; or else we may have all the Wisdom of the Antients, and yet be as ignorant of God's Nature as they were, if we call not in divine Revelation to our Aid.



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C H A P.



## C H A P. VII.

**P.** **T**HE next on whom our Savior pronounceth a Blessing are the Peace-makers. Such, as I conceive act conformably to St. Paul's Rule; *If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all Men.* And well he laid it down with a Restriction, for with some it is impossible to live in Peace.

**D.** You may see therefore the Christian Philosophy in this Beatitude. *Blessed are the Peace-makers for they shall be called the Children of God.* For there is nothing more effectual to wean a Man from the Love of this World, than to consider how little Peace he enjoys in it. What with the Oppression of Men in Power and the Tyranny of the great ones, what with the Obstinacy and Disobedience of Inferiors, and what with the Murmurs, Peevishness and Frowardness of us all, there is hardly to be expected any long Continuance of publick Peace in the most flourishing Circumstances; Nay even the private Quarrels between Relations and Neighbors have such a general Influence, to disturb the Harmony and good Agreement of those with whom we live  
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and converse, that there is scarcely a Society or Family, of any Note and Distinction among us, but is divided into Parties, with Heart-burnings and Bickerings enough, to make every good Man sick of his Station in Life, if he have not much of this Christian Philosophy in him; when he can hardly turn himself round amongst those who are called his Friends and Acquaintance, without observing the Evil Spirit of Discord and Contention working in the Bosom. This World is therefore like the troubled Sea, always casting up Mire and Filth, and were it not for the calm and steddý Hand of some few, who are given to Peace, there would be no living in it: And even those few, for the Love they have unto Peace, meet with Hatred often for their Good-will; for there are not many who will say with the Psalmist, *Let the Righteous smite me, it shall be a Kindness, let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent Oil.* Psa. 141. 5. 'Tis well there is some Authority in the World otherwise there would be no Peace in it.

*P.* But in taking upon us to be Peace-makers may we not be too forward, and meddle with that which doth not belong to us?

*D.* The Office of a Peace-maker is to be distinguished and considered in a twofold

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Respect, according as it regards either publick or private Life. In publick Life, I own, it belongs to Persons of highest Condition to interpose and accommodate Differences of national Concern, and no one takes upon him this Part but such as are of great Authority, as well as great Esteem with the contending Powers; and it is never accounted any lessening of their Character, but rather a Mark of Honor to be chosen a Moderator in such great Affairs. But in private Life this Office is of general Extent and is not to be circumscribed within the Bounds of publick Eminency or Authority; for every Christian of meaner Station in the World may often have it in his Power to become a Peace-maker. Private Families have Quarrels, which a menial Servant may possibly reconcile; and nothing more common amongst good Neighbors than to call in an indifferent Person to be Judge of their ordinary Contentions, and to assent to their Determinations of the matter in Dispute; and if there be but a Christian and forgiving Temper remaining between the Parties, no doubt, by the help of common Prudence every disinterested Person is sufficiently qualified to put an end to these Disputes. The Blessings of Peace are therefore easily to be obtained, if private Persons will not



not oppose wilfully, against the Harmony and general Consent of Mankind. For Discord and War are contrary to the good of the Universe, offer Violence both to Reason, to Nature, and even to the End and Design of the Being of Mankind. For God created Man after his own Image, peaceable and beneficent; he gave him Authority, 'tis true, over the inferior Beings, yet it was not to distress, but to conserve Things in Peace. Naked comes he into the World, born without Arms, either offensive or defensive, neither to hurt or stand in fear of harm from others, so very helpless is he, that from the Cradle to the Grave, he is in daily want of some one or other of his Brethren by Nature, to serve and assist him for the Necessaries of Life; and this undoubtedly, to put us in Mind that our strength lies only in Love and Peace with one another, and that alone is sufficient to answer all the Ends of natural Armour.

In as much as Peace is a common Interest which we have every one of us a natural Right to, therefore every one is more or less qualified for Peace-making, and the more active we are in this Office, the greater Good we do in the World. So that we cannot be said to be too forward, or to meddle with what doth not

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properly belong to us, whenever we take upon us the Office of Peace-makers, if we will but use common Prudence, and concern our selves with private Persons in private Life, to whom good Offices of this kind are generally welcome.

*P.* But there is another Part of the Office of a Peace-maker which you have taken no Notice of, and that is, the reconciling of Sinners to the Favor of God.

*D.* You mean, I suppose, the Office of a publick Minister of the Church, when he is called upon to be assisting for the Quiet and Ease of the Conscience. This is indeed a great and necessary Duty of the ministerial Function, and is appropriated chiefly and principally to the Pastoral Care; and yet some godly Admonitions from private Persons, in the ordinary way of spiritual Advice, have somtimes a Blessing attending them. For God's Grace is not confined to the ministerial Officers of his Church, altho' they be the ordinary Dispensers of his Word, and with Authority, in a declarative Manner, are the professed Publishers of God's Promises and Threats to Mankind. God can and doth work by other means when he pleases; and altho' on the Preaching of *Peter* the Apostle to *Cornelius*, the Holy Ghost fell on all that heard him, yet  
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he himself doth assure us in that same Sermon, that *God is no Respector of Persons, but he that doth Righteousness is accepted of him.* And therefore the ordinary Admonitions of any private Person may, without an Angel from God, be instrumental towards the obtaining of Grace, for Grace is a Gift, not to be confer'd by Man, but by God himself.

To the quieting another Man's Conscience the regular way to be sure is by the Ministers of the Church, when called upon for godly Advice and Admonitions; but if the Sinner, under Affliction of Mind applies to others for Instruction in such Cases, I cannot see how they transgress, if, with a good Intention and a devout Zeal, they do their best to preach Peace to him thro' Jesus Christ, or offer up their sincere Prayers to God in his behalf. For whenever the Conversion of a Sinner doth come, it is not to be supposed that it always followeth from the outward Ministration of the Word, but rather from the inward Disposition of the Heart to receive it. Spiritual Instructions and Consolation may do much, and much more when they are supported under the Authority of the Church, but after all 'tis God alone must give the Blessing.

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P. I know that St. Paul exhorteth *to let the Word of God dwell in us, teaching and admonishing one another*; and this as a general Admonition to all *the Elect holy and beloved*; so that I find all godly Admonitions and spiritual Advice are not confined to the Clergy, and that every private Person may offer Consolation, if he hath any Call thereto, by a broken and contrite Spirit; that it is no Invasion upon the sacred Office, to endeavour to instruct and inform any Man's Conscience, that is either in Error or in Doubt, if we may by any means help him to make his Peace with God; and that a private Christian may administer ghostly Counsel in some Cases, tho' he must not pretend to the Administration of Sacraments, or to the Authority of the evangelical Officers of the Church.

The Office of a Peace-maker therefore is consistent with all Relations of Mankind, to one another in private Life, and between God and Man, altho' the Ministers of the Church are the proper Officers to act with Authority, in reconciling Sinners to the divine Favor, yet the good Offices of private Persons for this end, are sometimes accepted, as acting the Part of Peace-makers, in order to be accounted the Children of God. For they  
do

do not take upon them to mediate in these Matters by Commission, as the Ministers of God's Church, but accidentally as the Children of God, to manifest their brotherly Love and Charity, as Members of his Church, and in Fellowship with one another.

*D.* You see then that in this Office of Peace-making there is something heavenly, as well as of temporal Concern. The Angels and Host of Heaven in that divine Hosanna at the Birth of our Savior, sang, *Glory to God in the highest, and on Earth Peace, Good-will towards Men.* Christ himself was the divine Messenger of Peace and Reconciliation betwixt God and Man, and all his Precepts and Commands are nothing else but Lessons of Peace-making, of Glory to God and Good-will amongst Men; and our own Interest both here and hereafter is wholly depending on our Love and Regard to Peace.

*P.* I remember in your Discourse on this Christian Principle of Peace-making, you called it a divine and heavenly Work, and insisted much on the Blessedness of being accounted a Child of God, by Virtue of this holy and charitable Disposition to Peace. For this is the way to receive Christ, and to become the Sons of God, and to have an inheritance in him,  
and

and that this Blessedness is apparent in a threefold Respect.

*First*, As it is the Result of pure Humanity for the universal Benefit of Mankind.

*Secondly*, As it is a plain Expression of our Regard to the Well-being of the Universe on the Principles of natural Religion.

*Thirdly*, As it shews our Love to God and Man in a holy and christian Manner.

In every one of these Respects we resemble God so much, in the Exercise of this Duty, that we are to be called and accounted his Children, and have a Title to his Blessings.

*D.* Shew me how the Dictates of pure Humanity lead us to this blessed Disposition towards Peace for the universal Benefit of Mankind, and that a Man by Nature is disposed to be a Peace-maker, and if he acts otherwise, must offer violence to the Laws of every State, and be a pestilent Member of the common Wealth.

*P.* Every Man by his Affections, and the natural Tendency of his own sober Mind and Understanding, is bound to contribute his Endeavors, to make both himself and all those he converses with easy and happy, and to reap all the Benefits and Advantages of social Life; that no Breach

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be made in the Community, with whom we live, by Strife and Oppression, but that all may enjoy their Rights and Priviledges of what Nature soever without Interruption. A Blessedness sure; which goes as high in this Life as human Nature, without Grace, can possibly aim at. For Man was not made for Solitude but for Society, and he can have no well-being in this World without it. Tho' there be a great Variety in the Thoughts and Imaginations of Men, and that Variety must sometimes produce Contradiction and Opposition of Opinion, and consequently, Variance, if not Offence at certain unhappy Seasons; so that to err and make Mistakes thro' Inadvertency or Ignorance, we must allow to be a Frailty, which human Nature cannot expect to be always free from; yet the Disposition to live in Peace with one another, and to contribute means thereto, upon all Occasions, must be esteemed by us as the first Principles of social Life, if we will not renounce our Humanity, and behave below the Dignity of our own natural Frame and Constitution. For it is only Wilfulness and Prejudice that breeds Strife, we are not dispos'd to it by Nature, 'tis always something accidental, and from without that occasions it; but it is natural to us to join together in  
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Society, and to live in mutual Friendship and Amity with one another. And without Unity and Harmony, how shall Government or any Administration of Affairs for publick good subsist? The very brute Creatures would prey upon us, were we to break with one another and dissolve Society. For there is more in Unity and Counsel than in Strength, and it is more humane to rule by Persuasion than Force, and wiser also to live in Friendship than with Jealousy. The Laws of Reason and natural Righteousness teach us, that to shew our Humanity in Offices of Peace and Good-will to Mankind, is to act on the Foundation of an original Right, which all Men have to mutual Friendship and Comfort in one another, as being sociable Creatures and Brethren by Nature. If therefore Men seek to enjoy Blessings and Comfort in Society, they must evermore study to carry about them a Disposition to Peace, and consider it as a Principle of Humanity.

*D.* It is hard to suppose, that Men who are endowed with rational Faculties by Nature, shou'd deal with one another worse than brute Beasts do with these of their own kind, and yet by the Oppression and Violence that we sometimes hear of, surely

surely we may imagine no less, by the Depravity of some Men's evil Genius and Manners; so that the World wou'd soon tear itself to pieces, and we shou'd all live in a State of actual War with one another, if there were none to make Peace amongst us. The primitive Design of Lordship and Government, is not to act with a Spirit of Tyranny and Oppression, but to keep Peace and all Things in Order, that as little Hurt and Confusion, as may be, happen in Society : and so long as every one is doing his best to reconcile Differences, he is acting the humane and righteous part, and as a good Member of the Society, setting forward the publick Good. This is neither above nor below any Man's Condition to take upon him, if it may be done with Discretion; but it is easy to see how much it is in the Power of Men of Authority, to preserve Union and good Agreement, and whenever these neglect their Duty in this Respect, how soon all things tend to Riot and Disorder. From the Prince to the most inferior Magistrate, if any Blessings of good Government be designed, the first Care must be for the Preservation of Peace. This is expected as the sure Consequence of that Trust reposed in them by original Compact, for let the Power arise from whence it



it will, the Foundation or Institution thereof, was first settled in this prime and undisputed Right, which all Communities have to frame a Constitution of Government, to advance and keep up Order and Peace; and to be negligent herein, or use any Measures destructive of publick Union and Harmony, is so far a Forfeiture of Authority, as the Power exceeds the original Grant or Charter. For as no Man by Nature hath a Right to any arbitrary Dominion over another, so no Society is supposed by Law to lodge Authority any where for the Hurt, but for the Good of the common Wealth; and if the Magistrate will pretend to make use of his Power otherwise, 'tis a Forfeiture. And thus Revolutions in Government are sometimes brought about by Necessity, not Choice, *for the first Law of all Society is, for each to serve unto the others Good, and all to prefer the Good of the whole;* and if Men could be supposed to frame a Law contradictory to this, it would be void in itself, as being against the Laws of Nature and Self-preservation. And therefore the first and greatest Blessing that Men are capable of doing to themselves and others, is the studying for Peace and Good-will amongst Men; that they may be able to enjoy all those Advantages of Life, which the World

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But shew me now in the *Second Place*, how a settled Disposition to Peace contributes to our Blessedness, under the Consideration of acting on the Principles of natural Religion.

**P.** To devote our selves to God in doing according to his Will, as far as it appears by the Law of Nature, is to profess natural Religion; and this Duty of living in Peace seems to be imposed by God as a Law universal, for the Conduct of the whole Creation. If then the irrational and the inanimate Part contribute their share, to fulfil this Law for the Well-being of the Universe, surely Man also must be supposed, out of a Principle of natural Religion, to lie under like Obligations, and especially towards those Creatures which are of his own kind; for so far as he goes upon a rational Principle, his Actions must be accountable to God by the Laws of Nature. Now there cannot be a greater Evil, than to be at Variance and

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Strife with one another; 'tis inverting the Order of Nature, and tends to nothing else but the Ruin and Destruction of God's Creatures, contrary to the Ends of the Creation and the Harmony of the Universe. In conformity therefore to the other Works of God, who all serve the Ends for which they were made, Man cannot but know that this Duty of Peacemaking, being grounded on the Reason of Things, is an Obligation upon human Nature, and for which he is to be accountable both to God and his Neighbor. Every one, who has any Sense of Religion, will see thus much of his Duty, if he looks into the Book of God's Works, either without or within himself, for there is nothing but Peace and Order in the whole Contrivance. If therefore the Children partake of the same Qualities as the Father, when they are said to be like him, Mankind can in nothing so much resemble God as in studying Peace, and to preserve Unity and good Agreement amongst Men.

*D.* 'Tis certain this good and religious Disposition to Peace is a sure Token and Mark of God's Children: by it they stand in much Resemblance of their heavenly Father, as being of one Family and Brotherhood under him, conspiring to fulfil  
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all the ends of Peace, which is so necessary to the Well-being of the World. For if God did not uphold this inanimate World in the Peace and Order it is in, it would soon fall into Confusion, and this Universe would most certainly dissolve again into its old Deformity and Chaos. Men acting under him as his Substitutes and Instruments in the rational World also, if they did not regard Peace as an Article of Religion, as well as for the Ends of Government, would be disposed sometimes to act as Lions and Wolves, as we hear some have done who had no Sense of Religion; which cannot be from any Power they have derived from God, since it is so very ungod-like. But then to rule for the Preservation of Peace is to act under him, as God's and the Children of the most high. Every Father and Master, Husband and Neighbor, have, in one respect or other, some Portion of this Authority lodged in them; much Good may be done by using common Discretion in reconciling Offences, which sometimes happen thro' Mistake, to enlighten the Understanding and set Men right with one another, which is often all the Business a Man has to do in making Peace between Neighbors. But besides the Bonds of mutual Relation, Love and Affection, which have a powerful Influ-

ence to preserve Peace, the religious Motive of doing the Will of God by it is a farther Engagement. There is a Blessedness in it, which answers the ends of Providence, in Conformity to the other Works of the Creation, which in the course of the Universe go all on in Order, without any Confusion, to serve to the Happiness and Well-being of Mankind. How well the Elements serve for the Health and Conveniencies of Life! The Air and Water for begetting of Winds and Clouds, the Earth and Fire for various Accommodations towards our Well-being in this habitable World. The Plants and Vegetables never vary from the Ends of their Being, and yield their Fruit in due Season. The Animals irrational have a natural Instinct for Self-preservation, and yet contribute mainly to the Service of Man. Man alone of all the Creatures of this lower World seems left to himself, to do and act for or against his own Happiness, but no doubt the wise Creator wills that Peace should be universal amongst Men, that there may be no Difformity in the Works of his Hands; and whoever has the least Insight into Nature must see, that every Attempt causelessly offered for Strife or Contention, is breaking in upon the Order of the Universe, and an Invasion upon the  
Disposition

Disposition God has made for Harmony and Concord. If Men therefore cannot see a Blessing, in conspiring mutually for Benevolence and Charity to fulfil God's Will, nor any Religion in a peaceful Conduct and quiet Temper of Mind, they must be Infidels towards God and Enemies to themselves. For whether you call it Religion or natural Principle in us, it is much the same thing, since to promote our own Preservation, and Well-being in Society for publick Good, as necessarily follows, from the Consideration that it is the Will of God to have it so, as from any Fitness and Inclination in us by Nature, upon a Principle of Humanity or Self-preservation. This having therefore all that Fitness to promote the Well-being of Mankind in this Life, we must consider it as Evidence enough, that God expects it of us as a Duty, and out of Reverence to him we are so to demean ourselves in this respect, as to look upon all our Endeavors for Peace, as so many Acts of religious Service.

Shew me now *Thirdly*, the Blessedness of this Duty of Peace-making as it proceeds from a Christian Principle.

*P.* In considering it in a Christian Sense it appears still more plain and necessary, that those who would be called the Chil-



dren of God should delight in Peace-making, because all the Laws of Christianity are positive and expresse in urging this Duty. So much is this holy and peaceful Disposition esteemed of God, that *St. Paul* seems to give it the Preference to all other Christian Duties, when he ex-  
 1 Cor. 13. presseth himself in this Manner. *Tho' I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, have never so great Gifts, have Faith so as to remove Mountains, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.* There is so much Blessedness and Perfection of Christian Knowledge in this Grace alone, that there can be nothing of true Religion without it. For it is manifest that a Child of God no one can be that loveth not his Brother, as saith *St. John*, in distinguishing between the Children of God and the Children of the Devil, and one sure Argument of loving is keeping Peace amongst Brethren. *Moses* thought it sufficient to end the Dispute between two *Israelites* to say, *Sirs, ye are Brethren: why do ye wrong one to another*; And Christianity goes much farther in this Love of our Neighbor than ever the Law of *Moses* did, for it commands us to love our Enemies. This Christian Charity or Love never appears better, or more usefully employed, than  
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in good Offices for Peace-sake. The Word of Salutation which Christ Jesus put into the Mouths of his Disciples, when he sent them to preach and work Miracles in his Name, was no other than this, *Peace be unto you*. As if this alone were the utmost Perfection of all Blessings, under the Christian Dispensation. His Gospel also is called the Gospel of Peace, and the Kingdom of God Joy and Peace, and he himself the God and Lord of Peace, and thro' the whole History of his Conversation with his Disciples and Followers, very many are his Exhortations to Love and Peace; insomuch that he seems to make the Excellence of the Religion he taught, to depend upon this blessed Disposition to Peace.

*D.* You see therefore that Love or Peace is the great Characteristick of the Gospel; that it comprehends the whole of our Duty both to God and our Neighbor, when you consider it in a Christian Sense; that no one who hath any Bowels of Humanity, or any Principles of natural Religion in him, can want this peaceful Disposition; that it entitles us to Favor from God and Man, to be adopted and taken into God's Family and called his Children, and consequently to all the Blessedness both in this and in another Life; *for if Chil-* Ro. 8. 17.

*dren then Heirs, Heirs of God and joint Heirs with Christ, as St. Paul saith. This universal Love and Charity is the Badge of our Christian Profession, for herein we are distinguished from the worldly minded, who only love those that love them, but our Righteousness must exceed, and extend to Peace-making amongst Enemies as well as Friends. This Christian Principle of making Peace, is also a great Refinement of our Nature, and checks the least Appearance of Barbarity and Incivility amongst Men. I cannot say, but it is a sort of Sport and Pastime to see the combating of Beasts and Birds, when matched artfully together, and Men have always amused themselves, and do still perhaps innocently enough, with such Diversions: but then this is a sort of wild Nature in us, to take pleasure in what gives Pain and Death to inferior Animals; and were it not that God hath made Man to be the Lord of the inferior World, to have Dominion over the Beasts of the Field and over the Birds of the Air, it would certainly be a great Offence to Nature, to have such a Disposition, as would otherwise hardly be distinguished from Cruelty. But as for Stage-Fighting under the Notion of Gladiators, I cannot see how it can consist with Christianity, or be allowed*

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lowed of in any civiliz'd Nation; for God has made Mankind equal by Nature one with the other, and there is no Superiority amongst us, but what is acquired by the Laws of the Society; and tho' in some Governments we read of the arbitrary Commands of Princes, very little different from the Rules of the *Bear-garden* or *Cock-pit*, yet Christianity teaches us a more refined Lesson, and tells us that the Persons of Men are not to be disposed of to Death, at the capricious Will of any Prince, without some stated Law of the Community, be his Power and Authority never so great; nay that it is the Prince's more immediate and proper Business, to look after and preserve the Lives of all his Subjects, as far as is consistent with Government, even to pardon capital Offences sometimes; but evermore to esteem it the Magistrates chief Duty to keep and preserve the Peace. So that in this Sense Christian Principles refine and take off the Wildness of Nature, and lead Men into a more happy and blessed way of Living, than otherwise they would peradventure be disposed to, were not the Doctrine of the Gospel divulged to the World.

Observe then the Christian Philosophy in this Beatitude above that of the wisest Heathens. The *Romans* never excelled  
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more in Learning and Philosophy, than at that time when it was the Custom of the great Men of their Empire, to divert the People with vast Numbers of Stage-fights in the Amphitheatre. *Julius Caesar* in his *Ædileship* is said to have presented three hundred and twenty pair of Combatants; the excellent *Titus* exhibited his shew of Gladiators, and the beloved *Trajan*, as averle from Cruelty as the former, continued a Solemnity of this Nature, with no less than a thousand Pair for one hundred and twenty three Days together. If *Cicero*, if *Julius*, *Augustus*, *Tiberius*, *Nerva*, and other Cæsars preferred and made some Laws to put a Restraint upon this Practice, it was either to settle the Title of those who pretended to these Honors of exhibiting publick Shews, or to restrain the Profession of this Art of Gladiatorship within Bounds, or to confine these publick Entertainments to some Rule as to Time, Place, or Number of Combatants: it was in no sort from the Immorality or Inhumanity of the thing, but purely to hinder the common People from being debauched into a Love and Attachment to those, who either from a Principle of Faction or Extravagance, sought for Applause from such Entertainments. The Honor of removing this Piece of  
Barbarity,

Barbarity, out of the *Roman* World, was reserved for *Constantine* the Great, for until the Emperors became Christians, all the Learning and Philosophy of that great Empire could never, in six hundred Years Time from the first Institution, banish that cruel Custom. *Cicero* doth indeed condemn it, as it was practised in his Days, but he seems to allow of it in its primitive Institution, when the Combatants were all Criminals; but surely even in this respect, his philosophical Notions about it are vastly short of Christian Learning, for there is neither Wisdom nor common Humanity, in making the Punishment of the Guilty the Pastime and Diversion of the Innocent; nay even to set it in the Orator's own Light, to discipline a Philosopher against the Fear of Death, can it have any thing like the Influence of a Christian Principle, which is directly contrary to this barbarous Custom? For I may well suppose, that the Fear of Death hath not near so much Terror and Astonishment in it, when it encounters with a peaceable minded Christian, who places his Hope and Expectation in being a Child of God, as the Effect it will have upon the best philosophical Steadiness of a Heathen Hero, let him have never so long exercised his Eyes in the Blood and Wounds of his

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Gladiators, which may perhaps cause such a Firmness in the Mechanism of his Body, as to be unshaken at such Sights of Horror; but when a Man's own proper Body and Mind, come to be put under actual Trial at the Approaches of Death, the Case will appear quite altered from what it was in Speculation, and this stoical Hero will find his Philosophy to fail him, when a true Christian Principle will serve to support a Man and keep up his Spirit, at the last Hour.

But to return to the Argument before us. You have hitherto enlarged upon the Duty and Blessedness of Peace-makers. Let me now have your Thoughts of these Obstacles which hinder this Christian Grace, from having a more general and good Effect in the World.

*P.* Pride and Covetousness are sore Obstacles to Peace; two Evils which we must strive against, if we would be accounted the Children of God. The Duty of Children to a Parent consists in Obedience and Love, and there are not two more selfish and ungovernable Vices than Pride and Covetousness; the one makes a Man forget he has any Superior, and so is destructive of all Obedience, the other to value nothing but private Gain and Advantage, and so is destructive of filial Love.

Love. How contrary these two Vices are to the Gospel Notion of a Child of God, and to the Blessings of Peace and good Government in the World, is evident, when we consider that God's Children are,

*First*, All of one Family, with equal Pretensions to the divine Favor.

*Secondly*, All equally dependant upon him, and helpless without divine Aid and Assistance.

*Thirdly*, That there is enough to satisfy, and to spare for every one in God's Family.

*D.* Why are Pride and Covetousness great Obstacles to Peace, upon the Consideration that the Children of God are all of one Family, with equal Pretensions to the divine Favor?

*P.* Because the Children of God are not like the Children of Men, some in and some out of Favor, without any true Regard or just Cause, at the Will and Pleasure of the Parent, some born first and therefore treated as eldest Sons, and the rest all as younger Brothers, as the way is in this World. Now God makes no Distinction betwixt eldest and youngest, and casts none out of Favor or equal Expectations from him, who are obedient and loving. Their personal Character in  
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this World adds nothing to their Title to an Inheritance in his House; high and low, rich and poor stand in his sight as Equals, he knows no Superior amongst them on any other Account, but the strict Execution of his Laws and Commands. All are one and the same with him, of what Nation, or Kingdom, or Profession or Degree soever, so they have Faith in Christ Jesus. St. Paul tells the Galatians,

Gal. 3. 28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither Bond nor Free, there is neither Male nor Female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* If this then be the Case,

what have we to do amongst our selves but to make Peace and live lovingly together? Shall our Pride carry us so far as to strive who shall be greatest? when our

Mat. 18. 4. Savior saith. *Whosoever shall humble himself as a little Child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.* Shall we oppress, be injurious and break Peace, or contend for Riches? When there is such Deceitfulness in them, no Trust, no Glory to set the Heart upon, profit not in the Day of Wrath, are no Ransom for Life, when a good Name and the Fear of the Lord are much better, and we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven hardly, if at all, under the Characters of rich Men and Heirs of this World. For Titles, Ho-

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nor and Fortune or such things as these to strive, be at War with one another, boast or glory in them, is not like the Behavior of God's Children, or the Peace of his Family. Not the proud and the contentious, but *the Poor he setteth on high*, Psal. 107: *and maketh him Families like a Flock*, 41. saith the Psalmist; that is, to live and pasture together with sweet Love and Fellowship like a Flock of Sheep. *Only by* Pr. 13. 10: *Pride cometh Contention*, saith Solomon, *and the Covetous God abhorreth*, saith the Ps. 10. 3: Psalmist.

D. 'Tis plain therefore that the Children of God must have no Spirit in them, which seeketh not after him, or be avaricious of what the Lord detests and abominates. The Pride of Life is not of the Father, has nothing to do in his Family. He hateth a proud look, 'tis an Abomination to him, he will destroy his House, because he is of a proud Heart and stirreth up Strife. *And the Patient in Spirit is* Ecc. 7. 8: *better than the Proud in Spirit*, saith the Preacher. What a Family must that be where Strife and Contention, and the never failing Causes thereof Pride and Avarice are always at Heart! *Can two walk* C. 3. 3: *together, except they be agreed?* saith the Prophet Amos, in delivering God's Judgments against the Family he brought out of

of Egypt. But we who are fellow Citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God, as St. Paul saith, thro' Christ who hath preached Peace, have Access to the Father. We are called to Fellowship with him and with one another. If there be any Consolation in Christ, saith he, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies, fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind. Thus you see that Unity and good Agreement in God's Family must be, to keep up our Fellowship and Interest in Christ, to be Children and joint Heirs with him in our Father's House.

But let me know how these Vices, Pride and Covetousness, which are such Obstacles to Peace, are contrary to the Notion of a Child of God, because, Secondly, God's Children are all equally dependent on him for divine Aid and Assistance?

P. Whatever tends to make us think our selves independent of our heavenly Father, must certainly be contrary to the Notion of a Child of God, for we are not sufficient to do any thing as of our selves, but our Sufficiency is of God, as St. Paul saith. Now all Vices which are Obstacles to Peace tend this way, to

puff us up with a vain Opinion that we are somewhat more than in Truth we are, or that it is in our Power to make our selves big and mighty, by heaping up Treasure and lording it over Mankind. All this is in order to be able to depend on our selves and not upon God, as if God's Help were not sufficient for us. The Proud and Covetous seem to think in this manner, but surely it is vain to strive to be more sufficient and independent, than God thinks necessary for us.

**D.** We are bound to use Industry, no doubt; in our several Callings, for he is esteemed in God's sight a wicked and slothful Servant, who maketh no use of those Talents that God hath given him; but to boast or confide in them as our own Property and not the Gift of God, or as all sufficient, whether God gives them a Blessing or no, is a high presumption, and contrary to all Notions of Love and Filial Obedience in God's Children. They must not be above thinking themselves dependent; neither froward; or given to Strife for sake of private Lucre and Gain. That were to *lay wait for our own Blood, or to lurk privily for our own Lives*, as *Solomon* saith. God knows much better what is fit for us than we for our selves, and his Children ought not to be proud or covetous of other things, than he is

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pleas'd to give. To strive and contend and break Peace with one another about them, is but acting the Part of *Aesop's* Fly on the Wheel of Providence; which, whatever we think of our selves and the Dust we raise in this World, goes on in its Course the same way, whether we strive or no: Neither least nor biggest is able to help himself, or stir one Step, but as that directs; for we are all linkt together in one Chain, may pull and hawl this and that way, but can never break it. How unlike this is to the Nature of the Dependance of Children upon their Parents, who are always suppos'd to join hand in hand in Obedience and Love, for the good of their Family! and yet in some respect the Children here may be said to help their natural Parents, and at a certain Age to be able to live without them: But the Children of God can do him no manner of real Good and Service, nor afford him any Help, nor themselves neither but as he is pleas'd to give them their own Portion; which he giveth severally to every Son of his, but yet not so as to be independent on the Brotherhood, but for mutual Assistance and the Good and Prosperity of his whole Family. We must not pretend to carve for our selves, and say how much we, and how little our Brother deserves

deserves of the common Stock; this is altogether *Frowardness*, which has Pr. 3. 32. *Thorns and Briars in the way, and is an Abomination to the Lord*, as the wise Man saith; but God makes Appointments as he will, and his Measure, as it is our Lot, ought to be our Choice, without farther Dispute; for to strive with our Brother for his share is in vain, and moreover a Forfeiture of our own, and he will soon find out a way to take it from us. Harmony amongst Brethren is their strength, especially when they depend daily upon the Aid and Assistance of one common Father.

But then, *Thirdly*, let me understand how you make it out, that there is enough and to spare for every Child of God's Family, and that there need not be the least Pretence for Breach of Peace amongst them, thro' any Obstacle of Pride or Covetousness.

P. God is not forc'd, as the way of the World is, to diminish the Portion of one Child in order to add to the other, or rob one to exalt another; but he hath enough in Store for all his Children, and to reward every one according to his Deserts. If the Portion of Blessings in this Life were to be proportioned to the natural Appetites of Men, then indeed the World it self

might be too little, to answer the extravagant Desires of the hundredth Part of them, but if we bring our Appetites within Compass, there is certainly sufficient and more than enough for us all; and God's Children are taught how to do this, to moderate their Desires and suit their Expectations to their Circumstances; and he that hath all he expects is as happy as he that hath more, for Superfluity is but an Incumbrance. Who would desire to have enough to feed the Extravagance of Men? And for Works of Charity no Man lacketh, if he make but a just and right use of that he hath; for God computeth our Distributions of Charity, by the Affections of the Heart and not by Measure. The Bustle made in the World, striving and contending for this and that, is indeed quarrelling like Children for Play Things: A Child of God should be above such Follies, should not scratch his own Finger by snatching a Rose out of another's Hand; the Pain will embitter the Pleasure; besides this meddling with Strife for Things which belong not to us, is more than Sport,

Pr. 26.18. for it is *like a Mad-man casting Firebrands*, adding Fuel to Fire, as *Solomon* saith; taking upon us not to act as Children but Masters, not as Servants but Lords

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over God's Household, either with a Spirit of Pride or Covetousness.

**D.** It is a vain and wicked thing to dispute Authority with God in his Family, and to be sure this carrying an evil Eye against our Brother, because God is good to him, is very like it; for it is to arraign God at the Bar of our own Judgment. But is he not good to us all, and pays us all our just Portions? If it pleaseth him to bestow somewhat abundantly of his mere Goodness to another, what right have we to envy him that Blessing, or disturb his Peace, if we our selves have all that is our due? This is to judge according to Rules of moral Honesty and Prudence; but to be contentious, proud and covetous, are Blots and Stains in the Christian Character, and most unbecoming a Child of God, and the more so, because it is grumbling and repining for that which in no respect we can be said to want; for since we are all under the divine Care and Providence, if we trust therein for the necessary Provision and Blessings of Life, after we have done our Part as good and obedient Children and Followers of God he will distribute lovingly to every one and give us our just Portion. 'Tis a Pleasure to him to see his Children happy, every one enjoying the Fruits of Peace,

and whatever he gives is for that end, that so they all may mutually contribute to one another's Good. He knoweth when to give and when to refrain the Hand from giving, and if their Portion be not fully paid in this World, they have the more to expect in another: but however that be, want they shall not all necessary Comforts for their Well-being here, for that State of Life unto which he hath called every one. If some will therefore take upon them to complain of their Portion, they had better complain that they are not more just, more righteous, more charitable than they be, for if they desire a greater Portion, they must also, if they would have a right to more, be more abounding in good Works, and more perfect in Christian Graces: For God grudgeth not full Wages for good Services, and will give, to those who make the best use of their Talents, double. 'Tis our own Fault if we seek more and have not: Grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and then the want of every thing of this World you will account no Loss, for in that divine Knowledge are the Height and Depth of Riches, and all good Things.

What Inference do you now draw from the Whole?

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*P. First*, I infer that War and national Quarrels are to be esteemed publick Judgments, sent by God for the Punishment of whole Communities of Men living in Vice and Wickedness: for there is not the least use of War, for the Well-being of the Government of the World, but by Accident, as Physick for a distempered State, and all those plausible Pretensions of the common Safety requiring it, are generally but mock Arguments, to cover a secret Principle of Pride or Covetousness in the Aggressor. For surely many Wars are undertaken for no other end but publick Robbery, altho' that Reason be never given, or publickly owned. If Luxury and Vice did not make Kingdoms and States wanton, they would never think of prescribing so barbarous a Remedy for Evils, which at best is an inhuman Sacrifice of Mens Lives, as an Offering for Publick Good.

But when we consider and look upon it, as a national Punishment in the Hand of God, we see and learn how his Providence Works, to bring good out of Evil. The Alarm is then general, and affects all either more or less, and since the Sword spares not, when he sends it thro' the Land to destroy Man and Beast, nor distinguisheth between highest and lowest, perhaps



he looketh upon it somtimes, as the only way left to reclaim the mighty Men of the Earth. Were there not something of this human Thunder to be dreaded in the World, there would be perhaps as many *Nimrods* as Kings, and all Dominion and Government would end in Barbarity, nay the very common People themselves would be apt to lose all Reverence for God, and deify nothing but their Princes. But God dealeth with publick Communities and States, when they become degenerate, as with single Persons, puts them under Plagues and Calamities of War, as the Body of Man under Diseases, to bring them into some Sense of their Evil Manners and lewd Customs. For if we observe the Decay of the great Empires of the World in the History of those Times, we shall always find that national Vices and Luxury were the constant Forerunners of it. The Backwardness of the *Romans* to go to War, was surely the great Engagement on Providence to be so long on their side; for they never allowed of any War, but upon good Cause, after they had first sought Peace, and had no Hopes of obtaining Justice otherwise. But if great and mighty States will envy their Neighbors, and being full at home will not be content, but seek for Prey abroad, no wonder

der that such national Pride and Covetousness meet sometimes with a check, and cause Associations and Alliances against them, and the political Body to suffer national Punishment, as being guilty of national Sin.

**D.** What other Inference have you to make from the Blessedness of Peace Makers?

**P.** I have one more, and that is, that there is never any Breach of Peace and Good-will amongst Men offered, but by those who are worldly minded. Men never are at Variance with one another for the Things of another Life. One Man's Blessedness that way is a Joy and Comfort to all the Children of God. And we are told that *there is Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just Persons who need no Repentance.* But when Men are devoted to the World and the Things thereof, there is Jealousy and Envy, Pride and Covetousness always at hand to inflame them. This good Thing they are afraid to be dispossessed of; that which they see and have not they repine for; of that they have they boast; are wont to seek for more than they possess, and to possess more than they know how to make a good use of. So many various ways do Men discontent

content themselves by the Love of the World, that they seem not out of any sort of Necessity, but mere Wantonness, to be given to Strife and Contention; they have false Notions of themselves and of all without them; all would be Masters, every one of them, and all others their Servants. And even this would not do with some, for like *Pharaoh's* lean Kine, they may devour and yet be never the fuller, for their Appetite is insatiable.

*D.* You know what the Apostle St. James says. *From whence come Wars and Fightings amongst you? come they not hence, even of your Lusts, that war in your Members. Know ye not that the Friendship of this World is Enmity with God.* When Men are full of this World, they have many Things to provoke them, and therefore God pronounces a Woe against this World, because of Offences. There is so much Inconstancy in it, that we can never remain in any settled Way; so much Hatred, Wrath and Strife stirring, that if a Man keepeth not his Mind steady, in the Contempt of the fading and transitory Pleasures of it, he must expect nothing but Variance and Contention, where every one is disposed to seek only his own and not the good of any other. This is the Temper of the worldly



worldly minded, to be Lovers of their own selves, heady, high minded, without natural Affection: And can any Man expect long Peace and Good-will in such Company? So that it is natural to conclude, that as the Friendship of this World is Enmity with God, so the Love of this World must be Enmity with Man also.

*P.* I plainly see that as Peace-makers are to be accounted the Children of God, so Peace-breakers, on the contrary, are to be accounted no less than the Children of the Devil, according to St. *John*, for <sup>1 John. 3. 10.</sup> in this is manifest the Distinction between the one and the other. Whenever therefore the evil Spirit of Sedition in the State, or of Envy or Malice against the Church, seems to shew his Face, to be sure the Devil is then at work, laying Snares for the Destruction of the Nation. Is it not therefore plain Infatuation to disturb the Peace of either, and dangerous to a high Degree, to promote Discord or seek to innovate in great Matters, tending either to the Government, Revenues or Properties of either which are already well settled by the Laws in being?

*D.* All Innovations in Matters of such Consequence are dangerous Attempts, to be sure, For how can the Government alter in itself, or in the settled Estate of publick

publick Revenues, without great Distress of Property somewhere or other. This is generally the first Plea for Rebellion; Distress of Property and Reformation is evermore the Pretence; and it matters not at what part it begins, for when the evil Spirit is up, it will attack the Church by the State, and the State by the Church. For in our Constitution the ecclesiastical and civil Affairs are so blended and joined together, that nothing noxious or detrimental happens to the one, that hath not the like Influence on the other, and it is only then in a free and happy State, when there is an entire Agreement and good Understanding between both. Whatever strikes not in perfect Unison with the Policies of both, is surely from some discord- ing Principle equally detrimental to both. For altho' at certain Times the Pins of Government in the one and in the other are screwed higher and lower, to answer some particular Emergencies (for, as well as different Notes, we may suppose Flats and Sharps in all Harmony,) yet they are never to be turned but with Discretion. Neither can you take away the legal Rights and Properties of one Part of the People to give to the other, without altering and changing the Constitution; for this is more than cracking or misplacing a String,

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'tis like breaking Instrument and all, and putting an end to the Consort. 'Tis a very easy thing to talk of and begin upon Reformation, but when great Bodies of Men are concerned, and one main Part of the State affected by it, God knows where it will end. They who have the Laws in being on their side, will undoubtedly think themselves injured, to be abridged either in their Privileges or Properties, when the Necessity thereof is not apparent: but if Blessed be the Peacemakers in private Contests between Man and Man, surely they be doubly blessed, and to be accounted in a most special Manner the Children of God, who set themselves to be Peace-makers in national Quarrels.



C H A P.



## C H A P. VIII.

**D.** **W**E come now to the Close of the whole with this last Beatitude

*Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness Sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

The common Lot of all Men, whilst they remain in this World, is to live in a State of more or less Sufferings and Troubles, and therefore in Scripture our Stay and Condition in it, is represented under various Names, all denoting an unsettled State, and some severe Trials, Labor and Hardships to be struggled with, not without Vexation and Sorrow, before we leave it. Thus it is sometimes called a Pilgrimage, sometimes on account of our wandering in doubtful and unknown Ways, it is signified under the Names of a Wilderness, and a strange Country, and for the shortness of our Continuance in any State of Life, it is represented as an uncertain and precarious Habitation, in a City not to continue, and the like. But is not the Evil of being persecuted for Righteousness sake the hardest Lot of all?

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*P.* I should think so, if you had not told us, that the Christian Church, when it was in its greatest Purity in the earliest Ages, had the largest share of these Calamities, and fared then much worse than in after times, for that God hath sometimes chosen to refine his Church in the Furnace of Afflictions. It is also strange that Righteousness, which in the full Extent of the Word takes in all moral Virtues, should ever be thought hurtful to any Man or any State, or that any Profession, which hath the least Title to that Character, should ever meet with Persecution for a simple and righteous Behavior.

*D.* There is no one so good and righteous as to please every body in his Conduct; nay the very being more eminently so, is cause enough of Offence to some, out of Pride or Envy at their superior Virtues. This cursed Principle hath not only been favored by private Persons, but by Publick States; but then indeed it has always been from some Bigotry, for not complying with the establish'd Religion of the Country: This no doubt was the Case of the primitive Church of Christ, which was long under Persecution from the *Roman* Emperors, because the Christians refused to embrace Idolatry, which was at that time publickly professed by the State,  
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and dared not comply with the Constitutions there settled about religious Affairs. And therefore we find the Christian Apologists always challenging their Persecutors, to shew in any one Instance, the least Act of Disloyalty amongst the Christians to the civil Laws, or any want of Obedience to their Governors, except in such Matters, where Religion was concerned.

But what doth our Savior mean by being persecuted for Righteousness sake? doth he mean only for being good and virtuous Men?

P. No, for our Savior has cleared that Matter by the next Verse following; and hath shewn, that to be persecuted for Righteousness sake, and to be reviled and evil spoken of for his Name's-sake, are to be taken and understood to signify one and the same thing; the latter serves to explain the former Expression. For altho' moral Righteousness cannot be supposed to give general Offence even to Heathens, yet the Gospel Righteousness we know hath. And therefore our Savior's Meaning in the Text seemeth to be this, that to suffer Persecution for being good Christians, is rather Cause of Joy than otherwise, because it enhances our Reward, and in a special manner entitles us to God's

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Blessing,



Blessing, for of such he saith, *theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

D. From whence comes this Persecution for Righteousness? Is it from Evil Spirits, or from Evil Men only?

P. It is sometimes from Evil Spirits as we find by the History of *Job, a Man perfect and upright, one that feared God and eschewed Evil*; and here indeed the Devil seems to play his Part, out of Hatred to all moral Righteousness, and to impeach the Possibility of any Integrity to be found in Man. For as there are good Spirits, which superintend the Actions of Men for their Good, so we are to suppose that the Devil and his evil Spirits are constantly watching every Opportunity, to take advantage of all our Miscarriages, and seeking to do us all the Hurt they can. For we read that *there was a Day when all the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord*, but they did not come so secretly, but that *Satan* came also amongst them. By the Sons of God, we are to understand the Angels, ministring Spirits, who officiate in some manner, we know not how; but this we know that they have been sent as Messengers to Man, sometimes visibly, but generally after an invisible Manner; and that they have had in charge from God

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sometimes a good, and sometimes a severe Message; and any general and great Calamity on Man, is in Scripture Expression often represented, as the Work of the destroying Angel. But altho' that be a Persecution, yet it is not such as is for Righteousness Sake, as that of holy *Job*, by *Satan* and his Angels.

*D.* The Book of *Job* is a Piece of most antient History, and a very extraordinary Case, which happened in a time, when it was usual with God to impart his mind to Man by Visions and Dreams; which way of Revelation hath long since ceased in the Christian World: but are there not Persecutions to be expected in the World for Christ's Sake from Men?

*P.* To be sure there are, for many have been the Persecutions already in the Christian World for the Sake of Religion, and many more we have still reason to fear, from the perpetual Clamors and Contentions of Christians only, and their uncharitable Divisions about Principles of Faith, besides other Persecutions which we must at all times expect, from the open Adversaries of all Religion, and professed Patrons of Infidelity, who begin to get ground even in Christian Countries: and for ought we know, these very Oppositions to the Faith and farther Progreſs of the Christi-  
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an Religion in the World, may be secretly fomented by some Instigations of the Devil and his Angels. Now these Persecutions may be considered either.

1. As they affect our good Name.
2. Or as they affect our Properties.
3. Or as they affect our Persons.

*D.* What is the Duty of Christians when they for Righteousness Sake, fall into such a State of Persecution from evil Men, as must certainly affect their good Name, and take away their Reputation.

*P.* They are to esteem it no less than a Blessing, to suffer in their Character amongst Men for so good a Cause, and to rejoice and give God Thanks for it. For altho' we must allow it to be a sore Grievance, to have our Reputation blasted and infamously treated; for our good Name is esteemed a great Blessing, gives us always high Satisfaction and Contentment of Mind, and enableth us to do good and great Things sometimes, which in many respects it were impossible for us to do without it, and therefore whoever robs me of this Blessing must be highly injurious: yet as valuable a thing as this is, it falls vastly short of the Blessing of a good Conscience. So that if I may not preserve this, and keep my good Name also, I must assuredly esteem it a greater Blessing to keep



my Conscience safe, whatever becomes of my good Name, rather than seek after a good Name to the Hurt and Peril of my Conscience. This persecuting the Reputation of another is surely a causeless Piece of Offence, for one would think it could never arise from any manner of Temptation, like other Vices, which under the Prospect of Pleasure or Profit, excite and stir up our perverse and evil Affections. For what Pleasure can it be to see our Neighbors Fame for Righteousness and good Conduct sullied and brought low, or what Profit will one Man's Loss of Reputation, which is no Concern to any other Person, be to another? Surely if there were not some diabolical Spirit walking always to and fro in the Earth, as is said of *Satan*, it could never enter into the Heart of Man to be so perverse and froward, as to envy and defame the Good and Righteous, purely for the Sake of that which is virtuous, and praise-worthy in their Character. And yet we see often, so it is; Men suffer in their Reputation sometimes, only because they excel their Neighbors in Righteousness and Goodness.

*D.* This is all owing to the Degeneracy of Men's Manners, when the Age becomes vicious and profligate, when Men seem to be ashamed to be good, because  
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it is not in Fashion. When Luxury has debauched Men's Minds with ill Principles, as it never fails to do when the Days are Evil, Religion is esteemed a stiff Thing and unfociable; because it will not, it cannot perhaps condescend to all the Gaieties of the Court; it is too singular and not enough obliging in the way of Compliment and Address; respecteth not Superiors but only for Sake of God and good Government; keepeth Company alike with Men of high and low Condition, and yet seeketh Reverence above either Riches or Honors. The Things which Religion seems to have in Contempt are the very Things which the World has in Esteem, and necessarily thought to be the only Qualifications to raise our Character and put Men in highest Stations. Virtue and Religion are hardly to be seen amongst the Men of a vicious Age, or if seen they are at least an Eye-sore. Therefore under such Misapprehensions of the Things which contribute to our good Name, what righteous Man need be troubled, to be defamed and reviled? Either because he is so unmannerly perhaps to take notice of no Body at Church, in the ordinary way of Salutation at other Places; or that his Attention to the Preacher or the officiating Pastor is so exact, as to cause him to take of-

fence at any others talking or speaking idly, in time of divine Service or Sermon, or that in any other respect there should appear any thing of indifferent, or cold Behavior in God's House. Who would be grieved at being called starch'd or precise? for refusing to profane the Lord's Day, by vain Communications, wicked Diversions, or worldly Business; for being shocked at fashionable Oaths, or at ridiculing God's Ministers; for blushing at a lewd Scene or Expression, in our publick Assemblies for Entertainment and Diversion; or for denying to subscribe for a perpetual Round of idle Amusements, which take up so much of our precious Time? Who would be moved at being called merciless, for re-  
 pining at the Disregard of Jurors, upon Trials for Blood and Murder, or for contributing Endeavors as the Law directs, that the Guilty in such high Crimes should not be found innocent? Is it an Offence that thou takest heed, whenever thou go-  
 est into, or how to behave thy self in, the House of God? That thou keepest ho-  
 ly the Sabbath Day? That thou art afraid to be guilty of taking the Name of the Lord thy God in vain? That thou makest it a Matter of Conscience to reverence the Sanctuary, and the Ministers thereof, and therefore thou art startled to hear

Ecc. 5. 1.

Deut. 5. 7.

Ex. 20. 7.

Lev. 21.

12.



hear the Lord's Priests reviled, and art not <sup>Abs. 23. 4.</sup> ashamed that any should behold thy chaste <sup>1 Pet. 3. 2.</sup> Conversation coupled with Fear? That thou shouldst deny to consume thy Wealth and thy Days in Vanity, or fear some national Punishment from the Hand of God, for the Blood which is shed like Water, and we conceal it, or when Inquisition is made either deceitfully, or else frustrated of its end by the Obstinacy of Men, not without downright Perjury? The World, as it now lieth in Wickedness, is too apt to call the righteous, either cruel, or covetous, or proud, or over-scrupulous, superstitious and hypocritical in these several Respects; but if we be righteous enough to stand against these crying Sins, shall the Reproach of Men be any Regret to us? Shall we not rather with St. *Paul* <sup>Heb. 10.</sup> take Pleasure in being made a Gazing Stock <sup>33.</sup> by such Reproaches, in Necessities, in Persecutions, in Distresses for Christ's Sake? Our good Name will not suffer with him, whatever it doth with the World for so doing, nor need we be ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the Power of God unto Salvation; for having a good Conscience will reverberate the Shame on them, who falsely accuse you for your good Conversation in Christ. *Better it is if the Will of God be so, that you suffer for well doing than*

1 Pet. 3. 14. *for evil doing; but if ye suffer for Righteousness sake, happy are ye, saith St. Peter.*

P. I perceive therefore that this combating with the World for a good Name, is a Conflict that we can be no Losers by, let it go as it will. Let a good Name perish, so as we have the Gain of a good Conscience; but stake a good Conscience against the World, and what Profit, altho' you gain it and lose your own Soul?

Ecc. 7. 1. *A good Name is indeed better than precious Ointment,* as the Preacher saith, it hath a better Savor, and is more in Repute with Men, than the sweet Odors of Art and Nature, but with God that is not always good and precious, which is so esteemed of by Men; for Righteousness and a good Name always go together in God's Sight, but it is often far otherwise in the Sight of Men; in so much that some have been idolized amongst Men for notorious Acts of Injustice and Immorality. Whenever our Characters therefore depend only upon the World, we have no reason to rejoice in the Esteem that it hath of us, whilst Good and Evil are generally mis-called and taken for one another, and no good Man can trust much to his Reputation, or think any way highly of himself for his good Name; nay it is not without Cause, if a Man should be jealous of himself,

himself, and suspect that he stands not right with God, when he long continues fair with Men, and without the Injury of Scandal; because amongst so much Back-biting as is in the World, he may well enough be under some Fears, if he escapes it all, that he is not a Mark good enough for the wicked to whet their Tongues, *or* Ps. 58. 7. *bend their Bows to shoot their Arrows at,* as the Psalmist's Expression is. For whether it be out of Novelty, Envy or the Perverseness of Nature, surely the World is apt to delight more in the Reproach of good than bad Men, to see and find out a Blot or Stain sooner in a fair than a foul Character.

*D.* But that is not a Reproach which a Man should rejoice in, for a Blot is the same thing let it fall upon whom it will, and is worthy of Rebuke and Dispraise according to its Nature in all Persons. To be reviled for Righteousness-sake is to be falsely accused, to be put in a like State with our Savior Christ, either to have laid to our Charge Things that we knew not, or Things incontestibly good and virtuous, as only by us done upon a wrong Principle, and in that respect to communicate with him in suffering wrongfully: and *if* Ro. 8. 17. *so be we suffer with him, it is that we may be glorified together,* saith St. Paul, and



and therefore that very thing must be Matter of Joy to us.

You see then, to consider a Christian persecuted in his Character and Reputation is no hard Case; it would perhaps be harder if it were not so. For who is he persecuted by? Not by the good or religious Part of Mankind, but only by the Lovers of this World and the Vanities thereof: and if this World and he are at Friendship and Amity with one another, he must be in

Ja. 4. 4. Enmity with God, as saith the Apostle, and sure we are not apt to value much what our Enemies say of us! But ought we not to rejoice and with good Cause too, that we are treated in no other manner than the Prophets that went before us, and even as Christ Jesus himself, and that only for his Names-sake. *The Disciple is not above his Master, nor the Servant above his Lord. It is enough for the Disciple to be as his Master, and the Servant as his Lord. If they have called the Master of the House Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his Household.* This is our Savior's own Argument. Persecutions of this Nature must be no Offence to us Christians; we must expect to meet with them frequently and therefore it is our Duty to be pleased with the Will of God herein.

Mat. 10.  
24.

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But *Secondly*, as to those Persecutions which reach our Properties for Righteousness-sake how are we to behave under them?

*P.* Just in the same Manner. For altho' these no doubt press a little more hardly on us, they affect the whole Family and our Dependents, our Relations and Friends as well as our selves, yet to these we must yield with Patience and Submission, nay with joy too, if it be God's Will to place us in such a State of Persecution for his Sake. We must consider that the Riches of this World and of the next are neither equal in Value nor in Duration: we may paint the one in all the Colours of a lustful Eye, surfeiting in the good Things of this Life, and please our selves with the fond Imagination of some favorite Amusements; yet alas! the Vanity thereof will soon appear thro' all those Clouds of Passions and natural Affections, and exceed all Measure of Satisfaction we proposed, and make them glitter but as Trifles in comparison of the good Things of the other Life; but as to the Uncertainty and Duration of both, there can be no manner of Comparison at all. To be anxious therefore about the Loss or Gain of what cannot befriend us much in our well being, is below any good Christian, who

who computes his Blessedness by the Favor of God only. If these good Things of Life could purchase it, as well as Works of Piety and Religion, there would be some Pretence of seeking to be rich in this World, but if *the Poor* are more *respected*, if *their Expectation shall not perish*, if *he prepareth of his Goodness for them, heareth and spareth* them, as saith the Psalmist; then the wicked may persecute, set their Eyes against, lay wait for, cast down and oppress, and yet *he will deliver* them, *judge and maintain their Right against him that spoileth*. Poverty therefore in Life is an Evil that may well be born with Temper; Men may take from us all we have, and yet we be never the worse Christians; nay more blessed and happy by that means provided we lose it for Righteousness-sake. For *there is no Man who hath left House or Brethren for Christs Sake and the Gospels, which shall not receive an hundred Fold now in this Time, with Persecutions, and in the World to come Eternal Life*, saith Christ himself. To be free from Persecutions he doth not promise, but the contrary, yet an Increase of some good Things even here, he doth; and hereafter, eternally. He refused to take upon him to be a Judge or Divider of Inheritances in this World;

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Psa. 138.

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Pf. 9. 18.

68. 10.

69. 33.

35. 10.

Mar. 10.

29.



the Properties of Men he had no regard to equalize according to their Services here in this Life; this he well knew would be to increase the Love of earthly Things, and therefore he recommends it to his Disciples and Followers to part with all. The Love which the World had for Property in Goods and Substance, he saw plainly would deface their Love to him, if the least encouraged, and therefore he saith, *Whoſoever he be of you, that forſaketh* Lu. 14. 33. *not all he hath, he cannot be my Diſciple.*

**D.** In the first Ages of Christianity, when the Professors were sure to meet with Persecutions on all hands, the Preservation of their Goods, no doubt, was in vain to seek after, it could be of no Service then to defend them, against the general Opposition the World at that time made to the Religion of the Gospel; but in the present State of Christianity, now the Laws have settled the several Properties of Men, and well secured them to Christians as well as others, how are our Goods and Substance in the World to be esteemed and valued by us?

**P.** As Accommodations of Life which God has permitted to Man, as something common and of like Nature to all other Creatures on the Earth, to serve in some  
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degree as Comforts and Inducements to make Life tolerable. But we are never to look upon them as Things to fall in Love with, and set our Hearts upon ; for whenever they stand in any opposition to the good things of a spiritual Nature, they are to be looked upon with the utmost Indifference, not to be the least regarded, and if need be, we are to give them up entirely to preserve our Religion in a State of Persecution. They are of the World, and the World hath a Right to take them when God pleases. And what are we the poorer for it, whenever the World spoils us of them for Christ's Sake, and professing our selves his Disciples, when we have a right to expect and shall have Retribution from him another way ? When we come to die we must leave all these things behind us ; so let the World rob us of them when it will, it is but parting with them a little sooner : they are no Ransom for Life, cannot keep us one Day longer when our Time comes.

*D.* To be sure sooner or later they will appear to us not worth caring for, of no manner of Significancy at all, nay perhaps as Impediments to our Happiness : for if it were not for them, how many would be disposed to think earnestly of better things at the Beginning, as they are apt to do

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do at the later end of Life, and to have early Thoughts of the contemptible Nature of these earthly Things. To see the Prosecution of the World aiming at them in all Projects, persecuting and defrauding on all Hands, and without the least Regard to Religion and Righteousness, envying others any Comforts at all in them, and grasping at all for themselves, is a sort of Sport or Pastime to a Christian, who has weaned himself from them, and cannot but observe how the World accidentally contributes to his Happiness, by means of that very thing which in the Judgment of the carnal Mind was designed for otherwise. When he hath learned to say with holy *Job*, *the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the Name of the Lord.* Job. 1. 21. If our Clothes are too hot or weighty for us, we throw some of them off; over abundance we find is a Load to the Body, and to get rid of it a Pleasure; and why not superfluity of the Goods of Life? Which to the Soul's Ease and Happiness is an Impediment full as great, as too much Clothes to our Bodies. Our Souls are certainly as well worth being accommodated properly, as our Bodies, and they relish not sensible Pleasures. The parting with bodily Comforts is taking of some of that Weight which lieth heavy upon them sometimes,



times, and will give them more Liberty to refine and spiritualize, in order to throw off farther Incumbrances; and we ought to be so far from grieving at any Persecution, which contributes to ease us of this superfluous Load, that we may well rejoice at any means, which can be serviceable and help to rid us of it. Whilst we are in the Body we cannot be indeed absolutely insensible of the Pleasures of Life, but we may by the help of the Spirit of Christianity so transform our selves, as to be dead to any Love of them in comparison of the Love of Eternal Life, and thereby to despise them, whenever they interpose the least Obstacle against it. If God then commands us to submit patiently to the Persecutions of the World, which despoil us of our Substance, we must not think our Case hard, because it is his Will to have it so; and if ours is the Kingdom of Heaven for suffering thus for Righteousness-sake, we are surely well paid for our Submission. The utmost we can desire or seek for is, to be in that Kingdom, and if we be sure to get thither at last, it makes not much Matter under what Difficulties in the means, since even the best way we can take will be surrounded with Cares and Troubles, and we would be apt, upon a serious View, wisely to direct our Steps

Steps by that Path which is shewed us by God, as the most direct, as well as the safest Way. and he tells us that Way is thro' Sufferings for his Name's Sake. We are told we must enter into Heaven at a strait Gate, we must strip our selves of this World to find room, nay we must put off our very Bodies before we can enter; and if we be to part with them for good and all before we go hence, what signifieth their well or ill being for the short Time we are to stay here? Our mortal Life is but a hard Journey at best thro' a bad World to a better, and way-faring Travellers are not generally so sollicitous for entertainment on the Road, as to get safe to their Journey's End. If we but fix our Eye here, the Stages, tho' never so fore and perilous, or the Road, tho' never so bad, will but serve the more to provoke and stir up our Assiduity and Patience, in order to get the better of our Fears, and to press on more briskly whilst it is Day, that the Night may not surprize and overtake us.

**P.** But do not some of our Dissenters, from the established Church of these Kingdoms, charge us with persecuting them in their Properties for Conscience Sake?

**D.** If they do; the Charge is unjust and uncharitable. For the worst that a-  
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ny of them can say, is that some of the Subjects are stinted and restrained from enlarging their Properties in as full extent as others, upon account of Difference in Religion; but then that is in such Points only, which are so mixed with Government, that if some Difference were not made in disposing of publick Offices in the State, between those who are professed Members of our Church and others, it could hardly be said that Religion were a national Concern, and therefore the Policy of the State requires it, both for Security against private Enemies, and for publick Retribution towards avowed Friends. In all other Respects they enjoy the Protection and Benefit of the Laws, and may trade and enlarge their Properties as well as they can, except in one or two Articles, which the Legislature has thought dangerous to indulge those in, who by Principle of Religion pay Obedience to a foreign Power in all Church Affairs; but yet, either by Connivance or legal Toleration, both these and all other Dissenters amongst us have free Exercise of their Religion, and no Force put upon their Conscience; so that this Restraint is a matter of civil Government and not of Religion; not for the Sake of taking away or bounding Mens Properties, who are disposed to be



be industrious, but to direct their Industry to a certain Channel, wherein they may sail prosperously enough, and without any Jealousy to the Establishment. And therefore any cry of Persecution amongst us is an uncharitable Imputation and Scandal, if it be laid to the Government, as hurting the Properties of any part of the good Subjects of these Kingdoms, for it is far from the Design of either Church or State to impose it on them.

*P.* You suppose then that all worldly Property belongs to every State to dispose of in such manner as the Legislature thinks fit, provided it be for the good of the whole Community, and that no Man hath a Right to this or that Share, but as the Law hath determined.

*D.* Most certainly; when the private Property of every Person is secured according to the Laws. For this is the only Reason of entring into Societies and forming Bodies Politick, that Men may agree together to part with a Share of their Property, to answer the Necessities of the State, in order to enable the Rulers to preserve the Remainder to them inviolable. And if any Number of Subjects should by Law be restrained from employing their Property in any particular Manner, or from enjoying some particular Privilege or Office

*The Blessings of*

fice in the State, when other Subjects  
 are left at Liberty from such Restraints;  
 if the Legislature find it necessary, or con-  
 ductive to the publick Peace, Security or  
 good Agreement of the whole, to come  
 into these Measures, they have not only  
 a Right, but seem bound by their Office  
 to make such restraining Laws. And it  
 doth not alter the Case whether such Res-  
 traint be enacted on Account of a civil  
 or religious Principle; for as religious Prin-  
 ciples often interfere with civil, and have  
 a great Influence on the civil State; the  
 civil Powers have a right to secure the ci-  
 vil Peace and Government against the ill  
 Effects of all Principles of what Nature  
 soever. Religion is so far and no farther  
 the Object of the civil Magistrates Power,  
 as it hath an Influence on the civil Go-  
 vernment, which is the proper Business of  
 the Magistrate to support; and in this Sense  
 his Authority reacheth to things pertain-  
 ing to God as well as Man. He is *Arbi-  
 ter utriusque Tabula*, and no Person or  
 Body of Men within the State must pre-  
 tend Independance on him in Things sa-  
 cred, altho' he hath no right to force the  
 Conscience. There is such a Mixture al-  
 ways of civil and religious Concerns in  
 Government, that you cannot separate  
 the Authority over the one from the other,

or

or place it (in one and the same State) in different supreme Governors. Therefore the King by our Laws is called *Persona mixta*, one that is both in a religious and civil Capacity, qualified to execute in all Matters either of religious or civil Concern, as they depend upon the outward Government or Administration. What hinders then since the Law disposes of Property, that it should not be just and righteous in our Governors, to enlarge the Authority of some for their outward free Attachment to the State, both in a civil and religious Relation, and to restrain others from an equal Share in publick Offices, and from some Branches in Trade, who comply not but in Part, to the Constitutions of the Establish'd Church, altho' in other things they yield without Reserve, Obedience to the civil Establishment.

*P.* But some of them urge this Matter a little farther, and say, that they differ not from the Establish'd Church, in any great Matters of Faith or Doctrine, they disclaim all foreign Jurisdiction in spirituals, and have joined and are ready still to join with us upon any Emergency against a *Popish* Government, or arbitrary Power; and therefore have an equal Right to come into Offices of civil Government with any of the King's most loyal Subjects,



if the Government does indeed disclaim putting a Force upon Men's Consciences, or injuring the Subjects in their Properties for sake of Religion.

*D.* No Man's ample Professions to be a true and faithful Servant and Subject gives him a Right to any Office, or to engage in any Branch of Trade, if he be not placed therein by Authority and Policy of the Governors; who may and ought to choose for the State as they think best: and no wonder that those, who in no respect differ from the lawful Establishment in Church and State, are preferred, and those, who do differ in Religion, let their Professions be what they will, are laid aside. For Religion and Righteousness-sake it is sufficient that their Consciences be no way forced, and that they enjoy the just Privileges of Subjects: for no one who is allowed the free Exercise of his Religion, and the Protection of the Government in the just Privileges of a Subject, altho' stinted in some Points of Trade, or in his Advancement to Power and Office in the State, by reason of some erroneous Principles of Religion interfering with civil Government, can any way be said to be persecuted in his Property, for he can have no Property, Privilege or Right, in what the Legislature thinks  
fit

fit to put into other hands. For altho' the Rights and Properties of all Subjects in all States are suppoed to be equally the Concern of the Government, yet that Right and Property, which is Matter of Favor or pure Policy, must be first declared before any Subject can claim it as belonging to him, and that Declaration ascertains unto whom it belongs, and the manner of holding such Properties. Besides Property in worldly things is not ours by divine Right but human, and Christianity left the Magistrate in the same State of Authority as he found him. If the Constitution had originally settled it, that Religion did not come within the Cognisance of the Magistrate, and the Subjects stood all on equal footing as to Privileges in the State; or if the known Rights of any one Body of the Subjects upon account of Religion were attempted to be overthrown, only in Favor to another Body of the same Subjects, without any Regard had to antient Laws, or in manifest Contradiction to them, then indeed this would carry the Face of Persecution as to Property; but since this is not at all pretended to be the inherent Right of any of our Dissenters; so the Conscience be safe, the Regulations about Property so far, is only Matter of either Favor or

good Policy, when ordered by the State, and can be no manner of Persecution for Righteousness sake. And this may serve to justify the Righteousness of our Laws, and to restrain that foul-mouthed Cry of Persecution too much encouraged amongst some, who ought to consider that all Matters wherein Property lies, come regularly before the Legislature to be ordered and regulated in proper manner, for the Security of the State, not for Destruction of it, or to take it away unjustly from the Proprietors, who are possessed of it by Law, but for disposing that Part, which the Governors have in themselves, into such Hands as the Legislature can confide in, and in directing the Industry of others, to enlarge their own Substance in those several Ways of improving it, which the State allows off.

But to proceed to the Prosecution of our chief Argument in the Method proposed,

We have already considered the Behavior of a good Christian, under such Persecutions, as affect him, either in his Reputation or in his Property; how ought he now to behave, supposing the Persecution should extend to his very Person?

P. His Behavior must be all of a Piece; altho' he be indeed then touched in the tenderest



derest Part; submit he must patiently to the Will of God under such severe Trials, if he acts up to his Profession, or seeketh to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. When it goes so hard with a Man, as to have his Person in Bonds or Imprisonment, or in present Prospect of cruel Pains, and even Death itself, 'tis certain that Persecution in this World is then at the height, and carries all the Marks and Tokens of the utmost Wrath of Man, and appears in its most formidable Drels of Terror; and yet the Spirit of Christianity in the first Ages of the Church, we are assured, was able to stand against all this, and to triumph over the most barbarous Rage of persecuting Powers. In such a State, a Man hath nothing else but his Religion to support him: and what a Blessing is it to have such a Religion as can be able to withstand the Rage of Men and Devils, and which we may depend upon, will never leave us without Comfort, under all the Agonies of the Body, if we do not leave and forsake it first! we are fond of the Title of Christians, and we would certainly take it ill to be suspected of Insincerity in so solemn a Profession, but whether we be so indeed, and are able to stand Persecution for Righteousness-sake, and rejoice in

in it, we shall then see when our Constancy is brought to such a Trial as touches our  
 Job. 2. 4. Lives. *Skin for Skin, yea all that a Man hath, saith Satan, will he give for his Life;* and to be sure we make the Devil's Words good, if under any sort of Persecution we are so weak, to give up our Conscience for fear of Death.

D. You are satisfied then, that whatever Men may pretend, we cannot know their Hearts, till they are first tried by Actions: God indeed knoweth them, but Man scarcely knoweth his own Heart, much less the Heart of another, before he has proved it: And therefore Resolution and Constancy of Mind, altho' they be Virtues well known and easily defined, are not practised without great Difficulties; Men's Words and Professions are very apt to go a great deal faster than their Performances. But tho' this may go far with Man, it will do nothing with God; and tho' a Man be not so severely tried, as to be persecuted for his Conscience to the Death in the later Persecutions for Conscience-sake; for since the end of the first Century after the Reformation, that cursed Spirit of false Zeal hath been much declining, and little of it is now openly shewn, except in those Kingdoms where the Inquisition,

quisition still tyrannizes, yet it may be no improper Caution to give at this very time, and to observe to you that there is as much Persecution, and dismal Consequences, to be feared from an enthusiastical Spirit, as from *Popery* it self. Whether the Advance of Infidelity, and open Attempts upon Religion, the good Name, and Properties of our Clergy, now so generally encouraged amongst us, may not lead to Persecutions of all sorts, God only knows; but this we know certainly, that it is never out of Season to prepare our Minds with Constancy and Christian Temper, to meet the worst that shall happen, and if by our Righteous and good Behavior, we cannot turn the Hearts of our Adversaries to us, we may turn our own Hearts to God, and submit patiently to his Will, remembering what the Apostle St. Peter saith, *If any Man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this Behalf. For the Time is come, that Judgment must begin at the House of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? and if the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* <sup>1 Pet. 4. 16. 17. 18.</sup>

But



But how doth it appear that Christianity hath such Power and Efficacy in it, as to enable a Man to enjoy Comfort and Satisfaction of Mind under Persecution, when not only his outward Estate but his very Person is under Affliction? For as this is the greatest Proof can be given of his Sincerity, when God has brought him thus into Judgment, so it is necessary to enforce this Assertion by plain and undeniable Arguments: the former Gifts and Graces mentioned under the other Beatitudes, do shew a good Disposition to be enlisted under Christ's Banner, but this is the Completion of all Christian Warfare, for it shews that we are thoroughly disciplin'd in his Service, are able to stand the good Fight of Faith, and to come off more than Conquerors thro' Christ that loveth us.

*P.* Our Christianity teaches us three Ways to withstand Persecution, altho' it should affect our Persons for Righteousness-sake.

*First,* It teacheth to calm our Passions, and oppose one against the other till the Mind settles into some Moderation and Temper, and Reason has time to put Matters in a true Light.

*Second,*

*Second,* It teacheth to distinguish between the Mileries of Soul and Body, and between the Wrath of God and Man.

*Third,* It teacheth us to put no more than a true Value upon thole Afflictions we lie under, not according to the Estimation of the World, but according to the Esteem of God.

By this means it is apparent that Christianity affords sufficient Power to withstand all Temptations of this Nature, and if we add to it also the special Grace of God, assisting us at all such times, we can want no farther Argument to support us in our Christian Constancy and Resolution of Mind.

*D.* Shew then first, how Christianity teaches the way to withstand Temptations, by calming our Passions, and making them subservient to our Reason.

*P.* The Mistakes we generally run into, where our Religion is any way concerned, are owing to the Violence of Passion or Prejudice. Men who are in their Wits, and have been well instructed in the Principles of Religion, seldom judge wrong of their spiritual Condition, or are not much at a loss how to act upon any Emergency, being always disposed to do righteously and

and godly, because they suffer their Reason as well as Religion to guide them in all their Actions. Bodily Pains under Persecution, are not to be withstood; without first conquering the natural Affections and Passions; and this can only be done by a Steadiness of Mind, superior to the present Sufferings, and which is acquired in a great Measure by Reason, but it never fails when we add thereto the Christian Graces, mentioned by our Savior in the Beatitudes, particularly the first, *viz. Poverty of Spirit*, that is, to be poor in our own Conceit, so far at least as not to be provoked by any Passion, to do any thing unseemly, until Reason steps in, to inform the Judgment what is best and fittest. As thus, to Reason with our selves, whether the Persecution we now labor under be of such a Nature, as to be resisted without Sin: If it be not, whether it be such a Suffering as may be some way avoided with a good Conscience; and if it cannot, whether it be in our Power or not, to take somewhat from the Weight and Misery thereof, by opposing the Passion of Joy in another Life, against the Passion of Grief and Sorrow in this; by shifting the Scene backward and forward, to moderate the present Appearance of Evil, by the Hopes  
and



and Assurance of subsequent Rewards for Suffering in a good Cause.

**D.** By this way of arguing it should seem that Reason doth the whole Work of withstanding the Evils of Persecution, and there is no Want of Religion in the Case.

**P.** Reason indeed doth much, but if Reason were not first instructed by Revelation in the Joys of another Life, I cannot see what good Effect it could have alone, to make bodily Pains tolerable and easy, when Death itself is to be the Consequence; but then Reason so supported, makes very little of our natural Affections and Passions, for it is the Cause, and not the Suffering maketh the Martyr. *To be buffeted for our Faults and take it patiently, is no Glory,* as St. Peter <sup>1 Pet. 2. 20.</sup> saith; and Reason alone may go so far as to teach us to know this is but our Duty: but in suffering wrongfully for a Profession, which I really and truly believe is according to the Revelations of God binding, and which with a safe Conscience I cannot part with, without that Revelation first had, I could see no Reason to rejoice in the Injury done me.

**D.** You see then that by learning to subdue the natural Passions and Affections, you are able to support a good Cause under

der Persecution. And if your Profession makes you fall under the Rage of those of an opposite Perswasion, you have nothing more to do but to hold fast your Integrity in such desperate Cases; which you may the easier do when your Mind is brought into Moderation and Temper. In Matters of Religion a furious Zeal stops at nothing, makes no more of the Lives than it doth of the Properties of Men; the Dread of Fire and Faggot in the Church of *Rome* is their best Artillery against the Protestants; if they know not how to make Converts by their Arguments, they have had but too much Success another way, by making Apostates from the Faith by Persecution. Men must be well trained and disciplined in their Religion, to be able to stand such horrid Shocks of Nature, which are frequent Triumphs of sanguinary Zeal; must have the Patience and Integrity of *Job*, to bear up against them; and yet all our Blessedness depends upon this constancy of Mind, and we have no Title to the Kingdom of Heaven without it. But this Integrity can never be in such a State of Resolution until the human Passions are first subdued, and we have learned to place them one against the other, and stare our Circumstances with regard to present and future Happiness by the

the help of Reason and Religion, that so the Mind may acquiesce cheerfully in the Will and good Pleasure of God.

*Secondly*, Shew me now how Christianity teacheth to distinguish between the Miseries of Soul and Body, and between the Wrath of God and Man, and thereby instructs us in the Way to withstand Persecution, when it affects our Persons for Righteousness-sake?

*P.* The Influence which the Pains of the Body must necessarily have upon the Mind of Man, both being so nearly conjoined together in one, must be very great, and not to be overcome without help of a divine or spiritual Nature. *The Spirit of* Pr. 18. 14 *a Man, saith Solomon, will sustain his Infirmary,* and this Spirit Christianity gives us, by teaching to distinguish between the Evils that affect the Body, and those that hurt the Soul, and by considering the Price and Value of the one above the other. We are all sensible, that the Body we must certainly put off one time or other whether we will or no: that it is perishable by Nature, weak and feeble both at the Beginning and at the latter End of Life; even in its best Estate, at Ripeness of Age, in full Health and Vigor, it is nevertheless subject to various Accidents and Infirmities; to Sicknes and Diseases, Hunger



ger and Thirst daily; to the Injuries of Heat and Cold, and the Inclemency of the Elements; to the Rage of Man and Beast; nay to the worst Evil of all our own Intemperance. Therefore for its weak, inconstant and perishable Nature it cannot be esteemed of much Worth, nor is it to be considered as a Thing of great Price in respect of the immortal Soul.

*D.* What are the Evils which affect the Soul?

*P.* They are of another Nature quite. They cannot make it grow old, or annihilate it, so as to die and be no more, 'tis true, but they can add to it what is much more dreadful, an immortal State of Misery and Sorrows never to be removed and separated from it. They can diseased it in a spiritual Manner, so as to be always sick, always dying. They can devote it to perpetual Infelicities, to the Wrath of God, to Hell and Despair. Who sees not what a vast Inequality there is, between the Sufferings of the Body and the Soul of Man? Between Pains temporal and eternal? Between the Wrath of Man and the Wrath of God? In this Life to paint the most dismal Scene of worldly Persecution, we can do it by no other way so well, as by affecting the human Senses with the Horror of Gibbets and Wheels, Fire and Faggot,

got, and such other Inventions, which the Wrath of Man makes use of for Punishment of condemned Criminals on Earth: you cannot paint the Soul or Mind to shew all its Agonies to another; and yet there is an infinite Disproportion in the Horror and Despair of the one and the visible Torture in the other: something, could we but represent it truly, that would confound and astonish the Imagination of Man, and of which we can form no sufficient Ideas and Images in this Life, any way equal to the Nature of the Thing. But in that which is to come, when such things shall be spiritually discerned, and it shall be familiar to us to look upon and behold God and Angels, glorified and apostate Spirits, altho' we cannot say or even conceive in what manner that shall be, yet we know assuredly, that the Spirits of just Men made perfect after Death shall see God, and be like him, as the Apostle says; so also is it probable that they shall see those, who are discarded from his Presence, suffering under all the inconsolable Agonies of Soul at that dreadful Sentence; *Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* What that Fire is, St. Mark gives us a sad Notion of, when he explains it by the *Worm* which dieth not, for surely that must be

1 John. 3:

2.

C. 9. 44.

the Worm of Conscience and the Worm of Despair in one.

*D.* Under this Representation of the Soul and Body, and the Evils and Miseries affecting them, you cannot think it very strange that Religion should get the better of human Nature, and make Martyrdom no way terrible, but rather a Blessing to a good Christian. A Man of good Understanding without any Christianity at all, and with a small Share of natural Religion, may see Reason enough not to be much grieved at the Loss of his Reputation, when he is falsely accused, and may well enough stand that wicked Reproach of *Satan*, *Doth Job serve God for nought?* may bear to part with his Substance and Goods of Fortune with a contented Mind, whenever God thinks fit to permit Man to oppress and take them away injuriously; but the Case is vastly altered and the sorest Trial of all is, when Persecutions reach to the Bone and to the Fleish, and affect our Bodies with the Peril of Life and Limb; and yet there have been Men in the World, who have attained to great Firmness of Body, by enuring it early to Hardships of all kinds; to Heat and Cold, Hunger and Thirst, Labor and Watching, and even by practising upon themselves to endure Stripes and Wounds without



without flinching: but this brutal Insensibility will not in the least serve the Ends of Christian Resolution: for not the Mechanism of the Body, but the Constancy of the Spirit gives Ease under Sufferings for Righteousness-sake, when they affect our Persons; for whether the Body shudders or not, is not the Case, but whether the Cause be well maintained, and the Spirit untouched by such outward Accidents and Injuries done to the Body. If a Man's Spirit be not broken or wounded, lay on what weight you will, till the Body sinks under it, yet the Man will be able to keep his Conscience and Temper too. Hea-then Morality hath gone thus far, but Christian Constancy much farther; even to rejoice in such a State, under the Consolation of suffering with Christ, or in the same Cause with him; desiring with St. Paul to be dissolved and depart hence, <sup>2 Cor. 5. 6.</sup> being confident that whilst we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord. The Body therefore under Persecution we do allow doth labor, but the Soul is more free; it is less entangled with the World, and is more disposed to think only of spiritual Things. Therein consists the Joy of a good Christian, that he hath not only the Will, but Leisure also to be intent on heavenly Things; and no Wonder,

since even the Angels desire to look into them.

*Thirdly*, Shew me now the third way Christianity teacheth to withstand the Evil of Persecution, when it reaches the Persons of Men, which consists in putting no more than a true Value on Afflictions when they fall upon us, and considering them not according to what they are in the Esteem of the World, but in the Esteem of God.

*P.* The Nature of Afflictions is often greatly mistaken, when they are not considered in their Ends and Consequences. For they are generally by the World supposed and taken for certain Evils, which naturally tend to our Hurt and Destruction; whereas the Mixture of Good and Evil which is always in them, ordered by the Care of divine Providence, serves much better to the Happiness and Well-being of Mankind, as to a future State, than if there were nothing else but a constant succession of those Things the World calls good, to wait upon and attend us always. To suffer bodily Pain is not always an Evil: we do it often of Choice by way of Remedy, and yet if we were to consider nothing beside the Evil of suffering in the Body, every time the Physician prescribes a Dole of Physick or to open a Vein,

Vein, the Patient must be said to lie under the Evil of Affliction by his Means. So also Inquietude of Mind in all Cases cannot be called an Evil, because we may possibly be in such distressed Circumstances, that we can never be relieved and get out of them, without so much Sollicitude and anxious Enquiry, so much Contrition and Repentance, as is impossible to consist with true Peace of Mind. Many things therefore which we are apt to call Afflictions, are in their Nature partly good and partly evil, and it is Christianity teaches us to put a true Value upon them. It teacheth us to separate the good from the Evil, and ballance them together; to note the Circumstance of present and future Times, the Degrees of Pain and Pleasure, Sorrow and Joy attending them; to distinguish between sensual and spiritual, between natural and moral Evils; and by weighing all together to compute the true Rate and Value of every Affliction: whether it be worthy of Hatred and Resentment as a moral Evil, or of Sufferance and Toleration, as being at the worst but a sensual and temporal Evil affecting the Body, which in the end will produce a much greater Good to the Soul.

*D.* Is there no Evil in being persecuted for Righteousness-sake?

X 4

*P.*



P. None in the least degree if you consider the Affliction in a Christian Sense, because in the Mixture of Good and Evil which arises from such a Persecution, the Good far exceeds the Evil, future Joy the present suffering, and spiritual Pleasure the sensible Pain. Afflictions of this sort are but a kind of Labor for high Wages, which even in the Sense of this World is not called any Evil, but looked upon as fair Traffick and equal Purchase; but indeed we dare not call it so, because our Service is no ways worth all that, which the Goodness of God is pleased to give us for it. For in the Sense of Wages, that must be considered as Payment for some Service done to another; but God is in Reality no way helped or assisted by us or our Service, and in truth he only gives to us of his free Grace, on the Condition of serving our selves, not him. If we come to rate it in the Esteem of the World, it will be called a Labor heavy and burthensom to Nature, because it checks our Passions and natural Affections; but then that is as necessary to the Well-being of the Soul, as Hunger and Thirst to the Well-being of the Body: for it is as easy in this Life to surfeit in the Intemperance of Passion and Affection, as of Meat and Drink; and if Men do not learn to put  
some

some Restraint upon the Appetite of Hunger and Thirst, as well as upon their Passions, the Body will as well suffer by the Lust of the one, as the Soul by that of the other.

**D.** You see therefore that this Moderation of Passions and Appetites, as it only respects our selves for good, is a real Blessing, and has nothing at all of Evil in it; so far from that, that it teacheth us to bear with Afflictions, to place no more than a true Value upon them, and to consider them in the Light of Christianity, not according to the present Suffering, but according to the Recompence of Reward in another Life. All Persecutions therefore altho' they partake of the Nature of Afflictions, are moreover also to be esteemed, as the *Chastening of the Lord, which at the present,* Heb. 12. 11. according to the Apostle, *seemeth not joyous but grievous, yet afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable Fruit of Righteousness to them which are exercised thereby,* that is, we learn how to put a true Estimate on the Affliction; not as it is in the Opinion of the World, but in the sight of God. We know he is best able to judge for us, and if he thinks fit to suffer these Persecutions in the World, he hath his Ends therein wisely concerted; some  
Work

Work extraordinary is to be brought about for Good by these means. *Have I any Pleasure at all that the Wicked should die*, saith the Lord, by the Mouth of the Prophet; much less that the Righteous should perish. We see *Fire and Hail Snow and Vapor, stormy Wind fulfilling his Word*, as the Psalmist has it; and shall we think when he doth the like in the rational World, by Persecution for Righteousness-sake, and other wonderful Calamities, suffering the Wrath of Man to be a while triumphant in Zeal without Knowledge, that he is not even then fulfilling some good Purpose, and that if he hath promised a Blessing to the Righteous for suffering wrongfully, he will not make his Word good? Every Christian, who is perswaded of God's true and faithful Dealings with Man, is taught this way of standing against Temptations of every sort, for he knoweth *God is faithful*, as St. Paul saith, *and will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able, but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that he may be able to bear it*. If he putteth no more than a true Rate on the Affliction, and a true Value on the Recompence of Reward, and but compareth them together in the Esteem of God, not Man, he will, by the divine Grace assisting

Ezek. 18.  
23.

Psal. 148.  
8,

1 Cor. 10.  
13.



affisting him, see cause enough of Comfort and Peace of Mind and Conscience, altho' his outward State be in Appearance dismal and miserable.

What Observation do you make from the whole Argument on this Beatitude, which is the Conclusion of those blessed Promises, made by Christ to his Disciples for cultivating and improving those precious Gifts and Graces, which are according to the Institution of his Gospel?

P. You made an Observation, that there was more excellent and true Philosophy in this Christian Principle of suffering for Righteousness-sake, patiently and with Peace of Mind, than in all the Learning that the wisest Heathens ever declared to the World; more than either *Socrates* taught, *Plato*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, or any other professed Moralist ever wrote or practised. But I cannot take upon me to illustrate that Matter in the Manner you set it forth, and therefore I intreat you will once more give me the Satisfaction, to hear your Observation fully made out on that Topick, of which I have at present but some confused Notion?

D. You are to observe then, that to be above the Fear of Death, and get the better of the Affections of our Nature, by

a steady Mind and Constancy of Spirit, was the utmost Flight of all Philosophy before our Savior's Time, amongst the best and wisest of the Antients in the learned World. What great Encomiums and Praises universally bestowed do we read of, in favor of those great Men and Sages, *Socrates*, *Cato* and others, for their fine Temper of Mind and little Sollicitude in Death! What Observations were made upon their last and dying Words, and upon the Heroic in the composed manner of giving themselves up and parting with Life; and all this attributed to their great Learning and profound Philosophy! The Stoics did pretend to a Firmness of Mind and Body both, so as to be above the Sense of Pain: but the one, if it were so, would be no other than brutal Insensibility, and not rational, but the other must be allowed to be indeed a great Conquest over Nature, to keep up a Spirit of Composure at the Dissolution of the Body by Death. Yet there was no one amongst them all, who went so high as to think Persecution for Righteousness-sake could be any Blessing, or to rejoice and be exceeding glad for being in such a State. Where could be the Reward they proposed to themselves for so doing? They pretended to no Revelations from God of a future State, and their

their poetical Delusions concerning the Elysium of the Dead were so gross Conceptions, that they could never reconcile any one to give up his Life freely for the Sake of future Enjoyments, unless it were thro' a sick Brain or only in Imagination. Reason possibly may go a great way, to make a wise Man bear with Resolution such Evils as cannot be helped, and against which he knoweth it is in vain to strive; and that will make him yield outwardly, and seem in Peace to suffer Afflictions, but still it will never make him contented or indifferent to them, if he hath not some Prospect of Reward for so doing; much less to rejoice in them, as Blessings, or to thank Providence for them. This is that true Philosophy and Greatness of Mind, which is only taught in the Gospel of Christ Jesus. By it we see what is the Will of God, and submit because it is his Will. But the wise Heathen submits upon a Principle of Fate and Necessity, and is so far from thinking it to be the Will of God, that any injurious Dealing of Men should be in the World, that he supposes it must of Necessity be so, and that God cannot, or else he would, help it. The Christian part he knoweth nothing of, namely, that let what Affliction will fall in our Way, we must cheerfully conform

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to it, as a Dispensation from God; there is Duty in it; and not only Bravery or the Praise of Men, which is the least Consideration of a Christian; when he is under Persecution for Righteousness-sake. Taking up the Crols of Christ and following him in Tribulations and Sufferings with spiritual Joy, as they happen, shews much more Constancy of Mind, than standing against Death unmoved; for this can never befall a Man but once, but many are the Afflictions from the Hand of God, which are sent as Chastisements, and some of them might be avoided consistently enough with Heathen Principles, for Sake of Self-preservation, the first and supreme Principle of all Beings, as the apostate Christians did in the Days of Persecution, by eating Meats consecrated to Idols; but Christians consider that they have a Soul to be saved as well as a Body, and if they cannot save both, they can stand the utmost Pains the Body shall suffer, so they may not injure the Soul in any respect. What Heathen Moralist ever taught so divine a Lesson!

This Precept of Christianity therefore hath more true Wisdom in it, and shews more Firmness and Fortitude; than all human Learning ever pretended to: makes Afflictions and Sufferings familiar to us, so as we are no way surprized when they happen;

happen; teaches us to put no more than a due Estimate upon them; that there is a manifest Difference in them, according as they affect either the Soul or the Body only, and that there is no other way of triumphing over Death but by Religion and a good Conscience. The Time when to meet it neither human nor divine Learning can give us any Insight of, altho' that hath been often the fruitless Enquiry of the Sages of old: nor is it material for us to know. 'Tis sufficient that we prepare to meet it at all Seasons when God pleases, (and not before, as some Desperado's amongst the Heathens thought wildly of,) and make our selves early acquainted with its Terrors. Then it will be a matter well nigh equal, whether it attacks us in the Morning, at Noon, or at Night; and when once we have brought our selves to be indifferent as to the Time, by the help of Faith and Christian Constancy we need fear nothing.

*P.* I am so well convinced of the Blessedness of a Christian Life, that I wonder how it can enter into the Heart of any one, who is instructed in the Nature of these Graces and Virtues, to argue and dispute against the Excellence of that Religion, which alone is able to open all the Treasures of Wildom, and which is  
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built and founded on so holy and perfect an Institution, as will certainly make him enjoy all, that a good Man can wish for or desire to make him happy, if it be not his own Fault. But sure the World is at this time in a declining State, grown old in Wickedness and Vice, or else these are evil Days and Fore-runners of God's Judgments.

*D.* The present State of Religion amongst us is no doubt very far from being an improving one, rather the contrary, tho' perhaps the World be no more wicked now than heretofore, whether it exceeds in Wickedness, or not, is hard to determine, and not material for us to know; but very material it is for us all to walk in it with Circumspection, that we be not at any time entangled with the Cares and Vanities thereof. For there is always a Succession of Fashionable Vices in every Age to be observed, which because of their Generality are not easily taken notice of without Circumspection.

There have been great Improvements made by Learning and Study amongst us of late Years, and Men are become conceited of their own Parts, and seem to discountenance, as far as they are able, every mysterious Truth, which they cannot reconcile to their own way of thinking,



ing, in this learned Generation, and seem rather to depend on their own Reason, than on God's Word for Information in divine Matters. This is become the fashionable Vice of the Age, and so long as this Spirit reigns, so long we may expect that Men will argue and dispute against the Authority of that Religion, which disposeth them upon a divine Principle, to think poorly and despicably of their own Wisdom and Knowledge. And yet a Heathen Philosopher, as Great a Man and as wise as any of our new ones, I mean the Emperor *Marcus Aurelius Antoninus*, tells us that there is, who without so much as a Coat, and there is, who without so much as a Book, doth put Philosophy in Practice; and what is that but to be poor in Spirit, and yet wise, without pretending to Knowledge. This is truly a Mark and Token of evil Days, and these never fail in the End to be succeeded with some Plague or publick Calamity in the Nature of divine Judgments, for such, as you well observe, must be the Consequence of the present declining State of Religion amongst us; and therefore our chief Business is, to guard against the evil Day by Watchfulness and Circumspection, as becomes a good Christian. This is even necessary at all times,

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but very seasonable in the times of unguarded Peace and Plenty, because Luxury is apt at such Seasons to get too much strength, and Vice creeps into the Modes and Fashions of the Age, and appears in the best Company; but no Man of any tolerable Foresight will act without it, when the Days are evil.

*P.* To fill our Hearts with the Love of these Christian Graces, is the sure way to stand on our Defence, as Christ hath taught us; and you have so well explained them to me, that I seem not to be in much fear of evil Days, but am resolved, if my Prayers will not avail to avert them, to submit patiently to the Will of God, and suffer as a Christian ought in the common Calamity.

*D.* But to watch, and to look into things narrowly and carefully, which much concern us, is evermore an Argument of a sound Mind and Understanding, and when this Circumspection is applied to a good End, and Christian Purposes, it never faileth to promote Virtue and true Religion. It puts a Man upon his Guard with his Wits about him, and neither the World, the Flesh or the Devil, those great Enemies of Mankind, can well come at him, whilst he keeps himself in that Posture. For as there are some good Things  
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to be sought for, so are there many evil Things to be avoided, and therefore to seek for Enjoyments, and to be content to suffer are both natural to our Being. This is that Vibration in Life, which keeps the Soul, like the Pendulum of a Clock, not only always in Motion, but also in a due Measure and Proportion of Vigor and Spirits, equalizing and ballancing Good and Evil for its own Benefit and Improvement. So that the one is as necessary to our Well-being as the other. The Pleasures, as well as the Miseries of Life, have always a certain Mixture of something good and something bad in them; true Wisdom and Religion lie in separating the good from the bad, that the Soul may make the proper Use of both. For the wise and christian Part is as truly visible by Watchfulness, in all Acts of Self-denial, as in any other. Good and Evil always join to make up our common Portion in Life, nor is it any Discredit to have our Days chequered with black and white. The Days indeed are evil, not from any Vice and Corruption in Time it self, which is always the same and never more or less vicious, but that at one time more than another, Men affect to make their Mistakes and Failings more visible, and pride themselves in a Degeneracy of Manners,

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when Custom and Fashion are hardy enough to introduce Vice into the Publick and Supreme Assemblies, to be countenanced and carested by the Luxury of the Age. This Evil lieth altogether in our selves; Poverty and Riches in their various Seasons add nothing to the Encrease thereof, but as they afford Matter to exercise the Mind upon; for to bear with the one or make use of the other properly, are Parts, tho' very different, that yet have their Advantages or Temptations equally respecting Religion; and to illustrate our Wildom or our Folly, as we use them, either in doing or in Suffering as the Gospel directs, will put us to equal Difficulties. So that a Christian cannot turn himself about in the World, or take any one Step of Moment without Circumspection, and therefore our Savior ex-

Mat. 26. horts us to *watch* as well as *pray*, that we  
41. *enter not into Temptation.*

P. I understand then that many are wicked, generally more so in times of Peace and Plenty, and for that Reason such a Season affording a greater Measure of good Things is apt to be full of evil Days to them: that these would be good times if we would make a good use of them, and therefore a Christian is bound to exercise an active part, and make the best of his time, according

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as the Season offers. But what need is there, when there appeareth no Temptation near, to be always on the Watch? Why may we not rejoice in the good things of Life which God gives us with Innocence? I think the wise Man hath divided our Time into different Seasons, some for Joy and others for Sorrow; but to be always watching how our Time goes, is putting the bitter amongst the sweet, and giving this always an ill Relish.

D. Christianity no doubt imposeth upon no one a hard or severe Bondage; *Christ's Yoke is easy and his Burden light.* Yet every Master, besides his stated, hath other Hours of Service, and Servants must attend and watch his Call. Time is a Jewel to be guarded as a Treasure; yet it differs much from most others, in that the Loss hereof to one can never be another Man's Gain; it hurts no other by abusing it but the particular one who mispendeth, so that every Man must husband it, as he would his Meat and Drink for daily Sustenance; and there are many precious things that when lost may be recovered again, but Time, never. You think perhaps that there may be a Time when no Temptation is near; but take what Care you can, there are unlucky Seasons enough when Temptations happen

pen unforeseen, and there are ten to one that so happen, because they were unforeseen. We are never safe if we have not our Time in our own keeping, and that we may easily have, for we are never forced against our Will to mispend it, and yet what is there so easily lost! Every Moment mispent is a Loss; there is no such thing at all as spending it without Loss or Gain; nothing to make it indifferent to us, how we spend it: And all nocent Pastimes, as we are apt to call them, are in strictness of Speech very improperly expressed under these Terms, for they must be either good and useful, or nocent and hurtful. So that Diversions and Entertainments are to be complied with so long and no longer, than we see and know they be of use. Whenever you go farther and enter into them under the Notion of innocent Amusements, have a care they do not often interfere with some Christian Duty. The use of them is, to recreate and refresh the Mind, when it becomes languid and faint; we are not to live upon them for their own Sake, but only at leisure Intervals, to break off our Attention sometimes, from being over closely engaged in some Study or Business, which may endanger our Health. And what Harm can it be, what great Addition



tion of Bitter to the Sweets of Pleasure, taken in such Amusements as are innocent, to be jealous and watchful of our selves, that we do not exceed due Bounds? That we do not lay out too much Time upon them? Luxury hath brought in Fashion many idle Follies and Vanities, which every wise and good Man sees are great Encroachments upon his Time; and yet thro' the prevailing Force of Custom he must submit to, or else retire wholly from the World. Either in visiting or being visited, paying Attendance at Court for the publick Grandeur of the State, or on more private Parties of Pleasure to oblige a Friend. And yet in the manner of applying our selves to all these, great and many are the Temptations to mispending our Time; and it is highly requisite upon many Accounts, to make as few Excursions this way, as with Decency we can; for so often as we excuse our selves from the untoward Ceremonies which too much embarrass us on these Occasions, so often surely are we redeeming the Time. But it imports us much to consider, that Time is a Talent to be put out for our Lord's Use, and not to be lapt up in a Napkin, as a Thing indifferent. Some Day or other it will be brought to our  
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Account, and how then can we answer for the idle Days spent, but by a Ballance of equal Proportions of our Time usefully employed in our Lord's Service, that we may be able to set down five Talents gained against five lost. But when the great Auditor of these Accounts shall come to reckon, what Fear and Danger must we be in to state them with Truth and Exactness. This or that Day of Sloth and Idleness perhaps hath slipt our Notice, and there is a vast deal more than we have set down on the Debtor's side. We may have ignorantly supposed some Days indifferent, and not to be posted at all on either, for the little Good or Harm hath been in them; but alas! this is reckoning quite wrong; for every Day, will be marked in the Book of Life, either with black or white; there will be no Chasm in that Kalendar. What a sad and amazing Confusion must this then breed, in the anxious and thoughtful Mind of a dying Sinner, when his Conscience tells him, that in making up his Accounts with God, he cannot compute his mispent Time by Days, but by whole and entire Months, and perhaps Years, to ballance which with good and holy Offices, he hath only to account by Hours and Minutes! The End  
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of Life, altho' it be the common, is surely a very improper, Season for drawing up this Account, for whoever keeps not a daily Register of his own Actions, will be often much at a Loss; how much more then to such, who take no care to account but once for all, and that too at the Hour of Death!

In every twenty four Hours, which is but one Day, from six to ten Hours of that, is generally by most Men spent in Sleep, which is the very Emblem of Death; our Time seems perfectly lost for so long; and if by Intemperance and an evil Habit of our own contracting, we have given Occasion for too great a Measure of our Time to be so spent, we are in strictness accountable for that Part of our Time so lost in Sleep: and if by Sleep the Memory of all things past be removed for the time, how are we sure that something done twelve Hours before, be not totally lost to our Recollection; and much more if that Recollection be made but once in a Week! But how is it possible in any certain or good way to do it after Months or Years!

You see therefore whether Temptations be either near or far off, it is our Duty to watch lest we should mispend our

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**Time:**



**Time:** That it is hardly safe to spend it in Amusements and Diversions, call them never so innocent; That we are to be accountable for Loss of time, as well as for spending it in Vice and Vanities. If this be to mix Bitter with the Sweets of Life, yet assuredly it is such an Antidote against Sin, which we must take be it never so distasteful: That this is the Way to beget in us a good Conscience, and that will be a continual Feast: There is neither Difficulty nor Dread in it, but as we paint it in our own Imagination.

I have now done with this serious Enquiry into your Observation of my late Lectures, and am pleased to find that you have edified by them. This Season of Youth is the best time to fix the Mind, as well as the Will, in the Understanding and Love of Holy Offices; and it must be a high Satisfaction to me, as well as to your self, to find the Proficiency made by you in your tender Years in Gospel Learning. God grant that it may grow upon you to the Perfection of all Christian Knowledge, and that your Life and Conversation may prove conformable to these divine Graces, unto which our Savior Christ hath pronounced his Blessing.

*P.* I am sincerely thankful to you for this kind and fatherly Visit, and for summing

ming up the whole of your instructive Conversation, with this godly Admonition of watching our Time in these dangerous, I will not call them, evil Days. For now I perceive the great Secret for preserving us, from being infected with the Vice and Luxury of the Age, consists in nothing so much, as in husbanding our precious Time; for to cast about to spend it in idle Pleasures is a sort of devilish Craft, and will be put to account of robbing God or our Neighbor of some Duty or Service. That to keep Accounts straight with God, is to account daily, because the chief Requisit to do it well, is to do it often.

God grant that I may lay this to Heart so, as never to make an End of thus reckoning, till there be an End of Life; that my Hope and Expectations may be strong and comfortable, when I want them most, when Life is just finishing, and this World vanishing away. *Amen.*

**F I N I S.**

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EV 12





